WORDGATE
MICHAEL FLETCHER 95

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Lonely Child Lonely Unforgiven

Anonymous

BLACK ACROSS THE PALE GREY. BLACK ACROSS THE PALE FACE. AND HEAVEN WITH ITS HIDDEN SKY, AND BLACK EYES RETRIEVE THE SUN. WHY A CHILDS HAND RAILING TEARS, POOL THE WET AND EMOTIONLESS WEATHER. HE SCREAMS SO SILENTLY PASSED THE THE MIRRORS FAITH...

WHEN THE CHILDS DARK IS A SERENE QUESTION OF A WEEPING PALE GREY. A HANGING TREE TO THE WATERS SONNET, THE STILL PAIN LEADING THE DEAD AWAY. THE CHILDS DARK IS THE WEEPING PALE FACE LAIN ON THE WIND...SO LIGHTLY DOES HIS SHADOW FALL.

SORROW THE BROKEN CROSS IN ANCIENT RHYME. SORROW THE TEMPTATION, FORGIVEN DESTINY, TAMING DREAMS TO FOLLOW ACROSS THE BLACK. A CHILDS PAGAN SARCASM RUINED, AUTUMN TO SORROWS TEMPTING DEATH. NOW MY DREAMS ARE PAINTED LAST, AND MY MEMORIES IN THE DARK, CHASE THE PAST...SO PLAINLY DOES THE LIGHT SHINE.

THROUGH THE DREAMING WILLOWS TO FIRES BREATH, WHO CAUGHT THE PASSION ALONE. STOLE THE CHILDS CROSS, HIS KILLING DEFIANCE TO BREAK DESIRE, AND FALLING FROM MY HANDS BLACK. THE RHYME, TO STONE TURNED DUST TO RAIN: SUFFOCATED MY SOUL LIKE THE STILL WATER DROWNS THE TEMPTATION

BLOOD STAINED THE SHALLOW RAIN WORDS.

Lonely Child Lonely Void

Anonymous

scarce tones,
a piece of patience impaled by silence...
dawn.
as a treeless forest on the wakes of heaven,
a word is spoken,
it is shame's nothing.
time like water becomes sand slipping past the hour glass, as
all loss retrieves age,
a blade grass that catches the sun.
never narrow,
a leaf against the breast...
fades,
as death rains capturing silver pools,
stolen by lit hunger,
it is void.
remember the still hell.
a painting captured on a wall,
like the faces loved in memories pasted to a reflection...
hollow.
wisdom,
sun lost in hate impaling violence,
like broken rust scatters the page,
across my land the end...the end,
wasted.
a shadow in the glint,
a fleeting photographs blood like the winters dry blur,
it is painted.
taste the cross,
the black deep in bitter fear with faithless passion,
astray in confined sight,
empty as the grave,
as the waters edge,
a tear strips the face of laughter,
mending the stream,
it is a void.

I Am A Dead Man

Anonymous

screaming like a fire lit passion,
across my wake of breath to hell,
a stain to my vast waste,
water in its well.

Never the tame face
standing like hate, a rage within a maze
to capture the unforgiven rain,
a depth of darkness to candle light,
the well remain.
I am lies hungry
cascading like sorrow, a strange shame
to the weakness wet of forgotten narrow,
a thunder to its song,
a place to her window.

Save the shadow's morn
speaking like tides, a waves still wake
to separate night in grave violence,
a skeleton's king reign,
a well in silence.

I AM THE DEAD MAN
scorning sight like the wind, a traveleler weary
to the cult black of night in revelations,
a prisons soul depth,
a wealth of degradation.

On the Wings...

Anonymous

on the wings of her wind, i shall seek no end...lain softly in sorrow.
in the past of my night, i shall follow the path...cast darkly
before my tomorrow.
on the wings of the wind i shall seek shame by the last of its rain.
on the wings of her wind, the devil shall wake in the myth of his shadow...
seeking sheltering pain.
On the wings of her wind i shall open death like peace living
for the serene, like meadowless fountains that age with the transparent tides.
as she will follow softly in my arms stained in the love of blood.
as i cast my shadow on the shore with the stars my image;
that wearily shed the worth of my vagueness to its question.
as she, as weightless as the night withers into the emptiless plyth of fields in darkness,
a wonder to her dreams, timeless to impatience. as i shall walk with my spirit
tainted in the medievel breath ofyesterdays stone; like the glass of a broken morn.
as she, as the sun lain in windows seeking a walk about stream,
a flower in the mirrors face and then in a whimper...death.
and i as a cold song whispering a twisted rhythm steal her pale reflection
and offer her to love...to the wind.

The Perfect Image

Anonymous

We are the misunderstood!
We face the edge of life standing naked,
we corrupt those whose image is perfect,
we see the shame people cry,
we destroy serene beauty,
we are lost in the shadows.

We are the nonconformists who shape the world, we scratch the stone to bleed the pain. It is our touch that tears at the sun, and exposes the weakness people deem their insecurities. People are afraid of us, we are uncontrollable and unforgiven. They face us with the same hypocrisy as they face their own religion. We are not them, we are their image.

We dream,
We wake the hunger in people
We are defined outside the code of ethics,
We grow, we walk, we die,
We are the wind,
and the wind
will always
cry.

Scarce

Anonymous

warrant the time that bleeds still,
in the cautionless air of the warm soul,
with the rush through woods,
weeping the somber dead wind.

Keep the autumn's lifeless truth
in the vain, of bloodless rythms
with amber shrouds, and a reign of hate,
watching alone the empty sun, of a pale prayer.

Plagiarize the passion of lover's corral
in red, to truth, may warily see faith
with a satin tongue that whips peace,
waiting for a staining rage...a whimper.

Waste the tempted rain that tore the sky
in waves of distant shade, that paste hell petrified
with silk leaves to plainness,
weathering the cold steel, stolen by fear.

Taste the sacred shallow morn, for dusk
in fire shadows the passionless intent
with severed faces, with a shamed disguise
wanting to race the fallen seas.

Place the blackened thought before tomorrow's hate,
in a captured gaze through a bottle lost,
with winters deadened array of faults breathing silently, withering through the ice...patiently.

Rush the parched earth of scorned wisdom,
in bevelled reflections that feed corruption
with undying love to placid wishes...immortal,
wetting thine soil with dry wine.

Mirror the faint whispers bleeding in the sky
in transparent stone that watches love, like death retrieved,
within the autumn shell, a razor passion drown,
wandering through sun-split time in perpetual motion.

Scarce are the words we cherish in thought...
scarce is the pain of wisdom we desire...
scarce a sunset wasted without touch...
scarce are the dreams trust...
scarce is love.

The Hat

Ryan Butterfield

The black fleece hat seemed to cover it all
All the hatred that was entrapped in his mind
All the pity drowned in his soul
Yet he was the embodiment of peace
now the unclear picture flashes before our eyes
our thoughts fall into a hard, euphoric trance however, lost
in a morib following
it becomes a picturesque Halloween
one of a truest magnitude
Destroyed by an evil shade
So mysterious and cunning in its shape
This shroud strolls down an ominous path
a path of bent shadows dancing in the absence of day
Such controlling bond of gracious power
Fueled by our darkest fears
Lured with erotic pleasures
Shallow and cold, muffling all pleasurable thoughts
cheap sexual fantasy pollutes your mind
Systematic arousal numbs all functions
These ideals lost in the shadows boldly christen the future
The gain begins to lose in life
The brainwashed society is lost to a weathering dust
Blowing away with every gust of their traditional bullshit
the format encompasses us, dreary and cold
Consuming our thoughts into lies
The hat is the shadow that stalks
in the night that never dies

Sacred Feelings, Sacred Place

Richard Angarone

I walk alone.
I stand afraid.
In which I prayed.

Cause in this day,
There is no hate.
For there is only
Peace, hope, faith, and fate.

In this day there is no fear,
Except for one.
But I really don't care,
Because no one can hurt me here.

This is my dream.
This is my place.
This is where
I can't see my face.

I can't feel a tear
Fall from my eye.
I can't feel the pain
While I cry.

Cause in this dream,
There is no sorrow.
There is no remorse,
There is no tomorrow.

Appollo 8

Philip Antinori

A small blue-green sphere
Astronauts stark view of Earth
God's poignant teardrop

A Slight Turn of Events

Philip Antinori

Earth rotates through space
At one thousand miles per hour
Pirouette the Sun

God or Fortuity

Philip Antinori

Common threads of life
Weave among diversity
From one cloth came many

The Silent Death of James

Philip Antinori

Deep slumber took him nevermore to arise
Disguised scion of death did silently creep
Weep for our loss was swift with no goodbyes

Realize we're not promised tomorrow's skies
Surmise your fate and be prepared to sleep
Deep slumber took him nevermore to arise

Cries amidst loved ones are subdued in other lives
Sighs of relief twas not our grief to keep
Weep for their loss was swift with no goodbyes

Wise ones hold vigil on someone's demise
Surprised that death strode by without a peep
Deep slumber took them nevermore to arise

Prize the thought of sleep and death as allies
Agonize if it's time for slumber deep
Weep for your loss was swift with no goodbyes

Idolize life for the moment lives and dies Cries to our God
as you sow you shall reap
Deep slumber took him nevermore to arise
Decries our loss was swift with no goodbyes.

Crescendo, the Third Movement
Gina Baker

"Guys, take your hats off," Mr. Bimm said calmly but loud enough for all three hundred of us to hear. "Officers to the side please," he continued. This was my freshman year of high school, November 14, 1987. I had just turned fourteen, and this was the competition for the high school marching band national championship.

We all turned toward the center of the block and tried to move to where we could see the band officers. Because the flutes were so close to the front, I couldn't see anything. All I could hear was Mike Tijemes' voice as we joined hands. "This is it, guys---this is what it's all for. Do the best you can, do it for us, and do it for yourselves - for the time energy, and emotion you have sacrificed for this moment - not to mention all the sleep." Then, as was tradition, he led us in prayer. "Our Father who art in Heaven...Hail Mary full of grace..." The tension was as tight as a snare drum. I'm sure that everyone was praying for something a little different - to nail a solo, to hit the form, or for just a great performance. I was praying for something magical to happen because once the doors opened, I had no idea what to expect.

I had never dreamed of being part of anything like this program, let alone one that was nationally recognized. Never had I dreamed of eight hour practices in 103 degree heat or 30 below zero cold, three hours of sleep on school nights, skipping meals and practice every day that demanded 120 percent of my energy and strength...just to name a few things. In retrospect, I couldn't be more grateful for the memories.

Mike ended the prayer with the traditional emotional plea, "Queen of victory...." "...pray for us," we yelled in reply as we squeezed hands and hugged each other for luck. My fellow freshman squad member, Julie, and I turned to each other in our own little competition tradition (that only freshmen could think of, but one that stayed with us through our senior year) and as we put our fists together, we commanded the fates, "Wonder Twin powers activate form of great marchers!" All of a sudden, in a strong voice and with a command that was as familiar as our names, we heard Mr. Bimm. "Band, ten hut, ten hut!" "One, two!" we shouted as all 300 of us simultaneously sprang to complete attention, straighter and taller than the toy soldiers we resembled.

Shhhhhhhhhh.....POP! The airlock to the field at the Silverdome in Pontiac, Michigan slowly began to open as we marched down the ramp to the staccato rim tap of the snare. As we walked through the tunnel, it felt as if we were walking into a dream and the magic that I prayed for was only just beginning. The colors leapt out at us - the astro turf was the richest shade of green I had ever seen, the white line markers seemed to glow, and the blue stands on the back side of the field seemed to engulf us. As we marched down the fifty yard line to the front of the field in our opening block formation, everything seemed to be happening in slow motion. I looked out to the crowd of over 30,000 and in the center, I found a familiar wave of gold crashing down amongst the rest of the audience. Parents held up letters spelling Marian, pompons shook, alumni, friends, and relatives screamed for luck and yelled out, "Go flutes! Go colorguard!" As soon as I saw them, I couldn't stop smiling. I had to fight the urge not to turn to Julie and laugh. My head lifted a little higher, full of immense pride. This was the feeling that the upperclassmen said could only be felt through experience - that after this weekend,, we would really know what band was all about.

Once we reached the front sideline, we relaxed as Mr. Bimm took the podium and conducted our warmup tune, "Almighty Father." Our drum majors then took their spots as the field judges tested their tape recorders on the sideline. The announcer came on with the voice of a game show host and said, "From Chicago Heights, Illinois, it's the Marian Catholic High School Marching Band. Marian's show will include the following musical selections: 'Gloria' and selections from 'The Tenderlands.' Drum majors Barb Grossi, Ann Lee, and Lynn Feldner, is your band ready?"

"Band, ten hut, ten hut!"

"One, two!"

"Marian Catholic High School, you may now take the field in preliminary competition," finished the announcer.

That's what was said - that's always what is said, but you can barely hear it. Your heart is beating too loud - your hands are sweating all over your gloves - you are acutely aware of everything around you - you start to think of the show but just get nervous because there's not enough time - you hope you remember set 89 - and to crescen....

"Mark time mark!"

1(there's) 2(no) 3(turning) 4(back) 5(now)....

Reflections on a Summer Night

Gina Baker

The gods sprinkled golden glitter from the sky and they fell like stars, twinkling among the realm of humans. You feel you can reach out and touch them. Then you cup your hands, a little afraid at first, and capture one, careful not to damage it. You slowly unclasp your hands, and it looks curiously at you, not knowing what to think. You look curiously back, wondering where such a creature comes from. When you are young, your first instinct is to put it in a jar, give it food and air, and watch it. But in a couple of days it loses its glow and dies. When you grow a little older, looking at it through a jar won't satisfy you. So you place it on the ground and as it twinkles, you smash it with your foot and smear it across the sidewalk so the concrete starts to glow - but it fades fast, so you find another one to do the same thing again and again. Because when you are twelve, the glory is fast. Then quite a few years go by when you don't even notice the earthly stars. But when you come back to their beauty, you cup your hands again and capture one. But this time you watch it and wait until it becomes aware of you and lights up once more before you watch it fly away.

In Xanadu

Gina Baker

We followed our dreams
determined our fate
set our goals
for it's not too late
We wished for luck
ate our fill
toasted to us
climbed every hill
We explored new worlds
expressed our love
prayed to God
watched the skies above
We laughed out loud
let out our pain
cried for joy
danced in the rain

We shared our happiness and our sorrow
And together confronted a hopeful tomorrow.

Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep

Gina Baker

"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

What a horribly mixed blessing for children to recite, especially before going to bed. Kids are afraid enough of the dark and what happens to people when they die - I never really liked asking where to be sent if I should have happened to die that night - because I was not planning to die at that particular point in my life. When I was young, my maternal grandmother always babysat for me. I fought with her and talked back every time she put me to bed because she always made me kneel down to say that prayer. It's not that I didn't want to go to heaven or anything, but my parents never made me say my prayers. We only said grace at dinner on holidays or if someone remembered to start it. I thought prayers were a chore just like church. And as a payback to my grandma, I would kneel there and name anyone I could think of (including all my stuffed animals) for the "God bless..." ending, knowing that Grandma was kneeling down there with me until I was finished.

I was raised a Catholic just like my parents who had attended Catholic schools all their lives. Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation were as natural a progression in one's life as learning to walk and going to school. because I had attended public grade school, I had to go to CCD classes every Saturday morning along with church every Sunday with my family - that is, until I was old enough to scheme.

By the middle of fifth grade, my parents let me stay home by myself when they went out. That's when I learned how to get out of church. It started in sixth grade with Saturday night sleepovers. The nonreligious or nonpracticing Catholic parents of my friends never thought twice about letting exhausted twelve-year-olds sleep until noon on Sunday. Once in a while, a strict Catholic mother of one of the party-goers would offer to take me home in time for church, since it wasn't an option for whoever it was to miss. After a very worried look to my mother, I became very appreciative that she was not one of the strict ones when she declined the offer. Next I learned how good my self-discipline was.

Mass on Sundays was at 9 a.m., and my parents usually got up at 7:30 a.m. to get dressed and have breakfast. (Note - at age twelve, my only sibling was an infant.) I was an early riser too, usually 7 a.m. I would pretend to sleep for the next two hours because unfortunately we slept with our doors open, and my room was directly across from the bathroom. Every time one of them approached the bathroom, I shut my eyes and froze in a sleeping pose. Why would I endure this? Because if they thought I was tired enough to sleep that late, they would leave me at home when they went to church. It was especially difficult to lie there while my father, a chef, would cook pancakes, coffeecake, or muffins, and the smell would waft into my room as I could hear them eat a three course breakfast. Why? Just to miss a one hour Mass that usually only lasted 45 minutes at that.

What were my qualms with Mass? I was bored. It was the same basic stuff over and over every Sunday. There were different readings but boring songs sung with a tambourine and an organ, and the homilies were good only if the funny priest were there. In junior high, Communion was the best part, especially if we sat in the front. Then you could check out everyone in the church as they walked by the pew, It was also all the up, down, up, down, up, down, walk, up, down that I couldn't stand - but at least that part kept you awake. I could unconsciously recite all the words in the Mass that I had heard since I was born, but I had no clue why we said some of them and where they came from. With the verse "Crucified under Pontious Pilate" in the Apostles Creed, it wasn't until I was in high school that I found out it didn't mean that Jesus was a pilot of some sort - although I knew airplanes weren't around.

CCD was bearable when I was young because there were cool crafts, but later on we had to start memorizing prayers and the Ten Commandments. And all they ever told us about eating the "little pasty-tasting white things" was that it was the body of Christ and that we had to eat it because it was God's will. By eighth grade, we really had a grasp on things. The names we took for Confirmation were our favorite names - what else? Maybe one person researched some saints and picked a name, but they were really weird. In the end, I felt CCD was a waste of time. My mother realized that, too, when she jokingly quizzed me for preparation upon entering a Catholic high school. In retrospect, I must have been living on a completely nonreligious cloud when at thirteen, I thought the Vatican was in London.

As for Catholic high school, I was terrified of religion classes. Getting a grade for religion classes? My freshman year religion class focused on the Old Testament and was taught like a history class of Christian events and stories. My teacher would start stories with, "Everyone knows the story of Job, right? Well, after he...." Job? Who? Was he the one with the whale or was that Pinocchio? The city of salt? Ruth? Lambs' blood on the doors? What about Paul and all his letters?

My theology classes in high school and college (yes, I do attend a Catholic college because they offered me the best financial deal) were very informing factually, something many small-town Catholics are in need of. Last year I was discussing religion with a friend (born and raised in a small farm town) , and I said something about "the same people who made up the story of Noah."

"What do you mean, 'made up the story'?" she said.

"What do you mean, what do I mean? Adam, Eve, Noah - all fiction,."

"What?"

"I have no idea how you were taught, and I know you are very intelligent - but do you honestly think that two of every animal were put on a big enough boat with just Noah's family and that the rest of creation were destroyed because they were evil? If you believe in Noah, you can't believe that we came from Adam and Eve, because their family was destroyed in the flood too."

Shocked, she said, "You have blown me away! I don't know what to believe - that's what I was taught."

"You're not the only one. Many people take the Bible literally, but I was taught this in Catholic high school." This was one of the few good things I felt the Catholic church had done for me.

I also recently dazzled my mother during an episode of "Unsolved Mysteries." A segment in the show told of a priest with healing powers who obtained his gift after seeing a vision of Jesus and receiving scars of nail wounds in the palms of his hands that imitated Jesus' exact wounds from being

hung on the cross. My mother was amazed until I informed her that Jesus was nailed to the cross by his wrists, not his hands, which would rip the full weight of a man being hung. She just rolled her eyes.

In my senior year of high school, I did become very involved with my faith after attending a school retreat, but the more theology classes I took, the more I turned away form the Catholic faith. The final straw came during my final required religion class, "Christianity, Morality, and You." I never did well on any of the essay tests because I disagreed with practically every stand the church made on moral issues such as birth control, abortion, euthanasia, and especially women in the priesthood. This culminated with my final paper on why women should be priests.

I am a strong feminist, and my professor came across to me as being a sexist - not a good combination. I became very passionate about my paper because I found research proving that the Catholic church is your typical boy's club. Dr. Hauser did not personally agree with me on this issue. I honestly believe that was why I received a C on my paper - the first time in my life I had ever gotten below a B on a paper. He wrote that I picked the wrong points to argue my views. Sure enough, a year later the national news reported on the points the Pope made for arguing the same issue, and they were the same three that I had proven the opposite of in my paper.

My experience with the Catholic church has not been the most positive one, but as I tell my mother (who is a little worried at this point) who says the Catholic church is right besides the Catholic church? What would happen to all the Catholics if they saw Buddha when they died?

Scientology is becoming pretty popular. I wonder how they feel about women and goofy stories and standing up and down?

What I do believe in, however, is a whole other story. So to save you that story for now, I will go to bed.

I love my grandma very much and for the past seven years, she has not been in a state for me to remind her of this - so for my love and fond memories of her, despite the views I have shared with you, I still say, "Now I lay me down to sleep...."

The Love Affair

Mary Brown

The summer sun scorched the tall dry weeds that crackled under foot. Sweat trickled down the weather-beaten face of the farmer, causing him to mop his brow with a faded red bandana. His calloused hand slid the weathered barn door open, exposing the dark, still barn.

A shaft of sunlight filtered through the roof and revealed the ghostly image of a long-forgotten 1932 Model A Ford, resting peacefully. Still and lifeless, the machine was shrouded in a mantel of dust.

My heart pounded wildly like an archaeologist who had unearthed a tomb filled with wondrous treasures. Images flashed through my mind like the frames of a movies clicking at high speed. I could see the little sedan all shiny and new, rolling off the showroom floor, the farmer sitting behind the wheel, smiling and waving to his neighbors as the strange "ooga, ooga" of his horn sounded.

I struggled to contain my excitement. Just think, the passion between my mother and father hadn't even begun when this magnificent collection of parts was being assembled. Soon a love affair with this automobile would begin, and it would change the course of events forever. This love affair would be filled with pride and passion, with laughter and pain, and with beautiful memories of sweet contentment. Like all love affairs, it would remain forever as a hallowed memory.

The creak of the car door opening brought me back to the present. My love affair with Henry's marvelous machine began. After a short but fruitful session of horse trading, a price was struck. Fifty dollars seemed like a lot of money at the time considering we were so young and had an eighteen month old son, a mortgage, and very little money to squander on non-essentials. But youth and lack of common sense prevailed, and the Ford found its way into my life. For my husband, it became a trophy - a conversation piece - something his friends wished they had. But for me, it was love.

In the months that followed, I became engrossed with Bessy. I stroked and sanded the years of rust and thinning paint from her surprisingly blemish-free body. The years have been kind, and her

spartan construction had provided her with the ability to withstand the years of use and minimal care. Before long, she was ready for a new coat of paint, and a local who fancied himself a bit of a Rembrandt with a spray gun provided Bessy with her face lift. If she had been a Rolls, she couldn't have caused more of a stir in our tiny village. Everyone had been keeping an eye on her progress. As she rolled out of the garage, her glistening black body looked spectacular. Heads nodded with approval and broad smiles greeted her. Many had stories to tell about their early cars, and Bessy was a catalyst for reliving those memories.

For the next two years I enjoyed my time driving the rolling blacktops. Putting along at thirty-five miles per hour, the little sedan gently glided over the contours like a graceful dancer. The wind lovingly stroked our dog's caramel colored fur as she drank in the fresh country air. From his lofty vantage point in the front seat my son would survey the countryside with wonderment. He would laugh with glee at the familiar "ooga-ooga" of the horn.
The seasons gave way to years, and soon it was time for Bessy to enter another phase of her exciting life. She had increased so much in value that we decided to sell my beloved Bessy. I watched the new owner slide behind the wheel and slowly roll her out onto the road. With a wave of his hand and an "ooga, ooga," Bessy drove away. It was small comfort to know she would now have a new lover, a new life, a new place. She would fill his life with wonder, pride, and pleasure. A flood of tears blurred her image; the chill of the autumn wind sent a lonely shiver through my soul. That night I lived and relived the past, the joy, the excitement, and the pleasure of my love affair with Henry's marvelous machine. The memories linger still. I feel the gentle roll of her body, the smell of the engine, and the sound of her funny little horn. It's been thirty-five years, but I often wonder what became of her. Is she still spinning her special magic and making pleasant memories? How I long for one more ride.

Feeding

Mary L. Brown

The rosy sky announces the coming of the night, With nervous hops and cheeping seeds begins to fly. In fierce defiance, small defend against a larger foe,
With wings a flap and angry scolds.
Quickly it is over as each takes flight,
With flashes of color amid the gray and white.

The Nap

Mary L. Brown.

The old boy sat as chiseled stone,
Eyes demanding, blink and close.
Head droops down with a jerk,
As eyes fly open fully alert.
Surveing his territory, he turns around,
Yawning wide he pulls his body down.
Drawing his tail up to his chin,
Eyes slowly close as he settles in.

Color

Mary L. Brown

Flowers blooming under glass,
While snow blows over dead grass.
Reds and yellows blues and greens,
Flourish amid this winter scene.
Cold and bleak the short days hover,
While life awaits her warming mother.

Recollections

Mary L. Brown

Embers huddle on the hearth,
Small and crackling flicker rises.
Fed by twig and recollection,
Images dance in the misty room.
Hiss and sputter lowly fire,
Sending warmth into the gloom.
Sparks ignite in brilliant color,
Flashing back with bits and hue.
Shrouded memories cold and distant,
Drawing near to escape their tomb.

Aim, Fire

Mary L. Brown

The crack of the rifle shot pierced the air, and before the sound had disappeared the rats had vanished. Smoldering garbage offered up its gassy odor and a haze of smoke hung like a damp blanket over the dump.

Like most small towns in the mid 1940s', Ottawa had a dump near the city limits. The smell permeated the valley on misty windless days, and it seemed to feed on itself like a fire breathing dragon in restless sleep.

Back then, guns were not considered a threat, people knew how to use them, and target shooting was a measure of skill, not power. A target was anything from a rat to a paper with a printed bulls eye, (if you could afford to buy them). The city dump was shooters delight, a natural rifle range with moving targets everywhere.

I was Daddy's girl and, at the age of 10, everywhere he went I would go. This presented a problem for my older brother. It was almost impossible to escape my interference in his life. I challenged him constantly, and shooting rats was the ultimate test of my skill.

On this particular day we were tied, two out of three rounds, and I had the tie-breaking shot left. The last cartridge clicked as it entered the breach of my rifle. I picked my target, took a deep breath and held it. Pushing the rifle butt tight into my shoulder, I searched for the trigger. My finger slid into the gentle curve and tightened. I squeezed, releasing my final cartridge from the chamber. The rat, ignoring the attempt on his life, continued to forage in the foul smelling rubbish.

The hiss of the hydraulic hosesas the heavy metal packer compressed the hopper of plastic trash bags refocuses my attention on the present. The recollection of shooting rats in our youth has sharpened my awareness of how different we have become. At some point in our youth we ventured into life with entirely different philosophies. My brother and I share the same planet and the same bloodlines, but that is where it ends. We are as opposite as Princess Di and the Bog man. I am a women of many words, Russ is a man of few. I find everything interesting and challenging, art, music, history, nature, computers, cooking, new age, old age, and the present age. Russ, however, worked at the same factory for 34 years, never read a book after leaving high school, and vacations with the same guys, same place, at the same time every year. He never married, never had a mortgage and never left home.

When we talk, we speak the same language, but we lack depth and feeling. It's more like a casual conversation with a stranger in a grocery check out line. The thought leaves me saddened, with a feeling of being cheated out of something I can't even describe. I long to return to the days of rats and rifles, conflict and competition.

Comfort

Mary L. Brown

Pots and pans all a clatter,
Smells drift through the nose and too the platter.
Steaming hot, brightly simmers,
In the saucer, comfort shimmers.

The Other Side.

Wendy Calcaterra.

This was not at all like she expected it to be.

She stood naked and alone in a darkness that was so complete that she could feel its weight bearing down on her. She sensed no edges or walls around her. Only darkness. No sound filled her ears, no scents touched her nose. There was no time in this place --nothing to mark its passing. And so she stood. She did not want to move, though it was not necessarily fear that kept her from it. She simply felt no desire to turn around or to walk forward. Instead, she faced what she knew inside was the way she had come from. Was she cold or hot? She wasn't sure. She stood until something flickered in her soul.

Though she was blind, her mind's eye showed her a picture of a woman's face. The instant it came to her, she felt bittersweet delight flood her like the light of a fire. It was someone she knew very well, she thought. Someone who had been with her for quite some time. The picture moved in her head and now the woman was crying. Jessica wanted to go get her. Wanted-with a longing so deep it filled her whole being- to go to her and to touch her. Now the urge to move was very strong. She tried to lift her arms in the darkness, tried to touch the vision in front of her.

Something wasn't right. And with that thought, the beautiful image of the woman's tearstained face flickered out of existence, plunging her back into darkness. In the past, Jessica had not noted any particular sensation associated with lifting her arms. It was only now, when she felt no sensation at all as she lifted them, that the previous richness of the experience was revealed to her. This time, the muscles in her back did not need to tense. No air was displaced, disturbing the tiny hairs on the back of her hands. She did not feel her left shoulder pop into place as it had done ever since she dislocated it at age nine. There was no weight associated with her arms as she held them aloft in front of her. Jessica lowered them slowly and stared into the darkness, the memory of that woman-that beautiful woman-growing dim behind her eyes. The coals of delight grew cold inside her. And as each whisper of smoke drifted away from that fire, Jessica felt a ripping inside her. A loss she was so helpless to stop. It should have been very painful, she thought. And so she stood once more, facing the darkness.

With some small part of her, she knew where she was. It was just so different from what she had expected. An idea was forming in her head, and as she turned it over and over in her mind, she began to know that it was the truth.

The idea that she should turn around and walk forward.

Still, she faced the darkness, searching inside her for that spark that was the woman's face. She stood that way for longer than she knew, waiting for it to come back. And as she waited, she saw other things that were only vaguely familiar to her. They floated in front of her, like pictures on a distant screen.

Playgrounds filled with children on swings and merry-go-rounds. She squinted against the sand they kicked up into her eyes.

A kitten, yellow and white, licking her nose with its tiny, sandpaper tongue.

Winter, seen from inside a warm bedroom. Snow dancing through the glow thrown off the yellow lights strung around pine trees outside. forward into their arms. Their embrace was filled with love and hope and promises never to be broken. They were going to hold her and keep her safe forever. Their light filled her and as it did, she began to fill with the memories of millions of souls, all their ancient knowledge and wisdom was hers at once. She was becoming part of everything and everyone. Truth was made clear to her. Love was all there for her to behold and become.

No no no no no.

Jessica pulled back from the embrace of the light and the faces. It took tremendous strength away from her but finally she was free from the pull of their grasp. She fell back slightly and looked up at their faces, smiling and unconcerned by her defiance.

"What I saw before, I'm not going to remember, am I."

They shook their heads. The aura around them pulsed and became brighter.

Jessica found that she could not quite remember what was behind her and walked back into their arms. They wiped the last tear she ever cried from her face, and Jessica forgot.

Rain

Wendy Calcaterra

"They say that into every life a little rain must fall," said the man to Jessie's left. He appeared to be addressing her. He spoke quietly but Jessie had no problem hearing him since the bar was nearly empty. She put down her beer and swallowed the rather large mouthful she had just sucked in. Wiping the foam from her lips with the back of her hand, she turned to look at him.

He wasn't much to look at, really. He looked to be only a few years older than her--30 years old at the outside. His black hair was tied in a short ponytail and held back in a yellow rubberband. The man clearly hadn't shaven anytime in the recent past, and his bloodshot eyes told Jessie this was not his first hour in the bar tonight. A cigarette badly in need of tap in the ashtray dangled from his right hand. Jessie propped her elbows on the bar and sighed. *Why the hell not?*

" Excuse me?"

The man squinted and stared at Jessie a second longer before tapping the cigarette and taking another puff. He turned his head and blew the smoke out the side of his mouth, his eyes never leaving Jessie the whole time. "I don't know about you, but I sure as hell hope I closed my damn car windows before I came in. Hell of a storm out there."

"Yeah." Jessie turned her head away from him and picked up her beer again. Great. Another witty conversation about the weather. How original. She had expected much more from his original line. It was bad enough that she was still here on a Tuesday night when the rest of the world was tucked into bed dreaming sweet dreams and resting up for the Wednesday morning rush hour. It was bad enough that she was here at all really. And now this guy.

"You ever hear that phrase 'they say that into every life a little rain must fall'?" He took a sip from his drink, and she heard the ice crash into the bottom of the glass as he set the empty old-fashioned down. "Bartender! Hit me." He motioned to Jessie with a nod, "You need a refill?"

Free drinks. The night was improving after all. Jessie slid the mug toward the man and leaned back in her chair. Neon light from the motel across the street shone through the bar's rainstreaked front window and painted dripping blue scars on the man's face. She watched as one slid down his forehead and onto his nose. Slowly she moved her focus past the illusion and back to the man's actual features again. A smile was turning on the corners of his lips as he watched her staring at him. Jessie turned to face the bar again as she felt red heat crawling up out of her shirt and into her cheeks.

"Refill for the lady too, bartender?" He took a final long puff and crushed out the cigarette. "So what of it?"

"I'm sorry?" Jessie asked, hoping the blush was fading from her face. She hated that - had no control over it and hated it all the more because of that very fact.

"The rain phrase. I'm askin' you if you ever heard it. I'm buyin' you a beer in order to hear the answer to that one simple question, so if you'll oblige me, have you ever heard the phrase."

He said it more as a statement than a question and to Jessie it seemed to command an answer even more that way. "Yes, I guess I have heard it. And thank you for the beer." She let a small smile find its way up to her mouth for the first time.

"All right then. Now we're getting somewhere. My name is Rocko. I ask you that question as a kind of a lead-in to a few more, the first one being have you ever noticed how that phrase is like the understatement of the century? A little rain? I don't think so. No, I really do not think so." With this Rocko took a healthy sip of whatever it was the bartender had refilled for him and then fell silent.

Jessie considered her options. Excuse herself to the restroom and proceed to quietly leave the bar (like she should have done about two hours ago). Simply get up from the bar and move to a table by herself. Ask the man to explain himself, thus opening a can of worms, the size of said can being unknown at present. "I should be in bed right now," Jessie said to herself. But alcohol was a funny thing and so she chose option three without really thinking it through. "Okay, Rocko. What seems to be the problem?" She took a long swallow from her beer and settled herself into the leatherette stool for what she assumed was going to be the Pathetic Story of Rocko and His Latest Girl.

He lifted his head and his dark eyes seemed to be scorning her sarcastic tone. "The problem as I understand it started when I was four years old." He stared in the direction of the bar but Jessie knew that

whatever he was seeing was on a screen in his own head and not among the bottles of Jack Daniels and Cuervo stacked on the dusty bar shelf. He nodded to himself and fell silent once again. Jessie waited for him to find the next line of the story up on the screen in his head as she took another sip. Rocko stared at that place on the bar shelf a while longer as he tapped the end of his cigarette pack against the palm of his left hand and then removed one and stuck it between his lips. He cupped his hand over the flame of his silver lighter and lit another smoke. He tipped the pack toward Jessie and she shook her head. He put the pack away and seemed to be content in having found the next line of his story. "Nobody knew it then....what it was going to be, but I could look at a kid, see. I could look at that kid and know - know to a dead certainty..." He was squinting and pointing the first two fingers of his right hand with the smoking cigarette between them at Jessie's head like a gun "...what color crayon that kid was gonna grab next." With this he looked back down at his drink and picked it up for another swig.

Jessie's concentration, which had been momentarily riveted by the strong reflections and implications in the man's words, was shattered by this last part of the statement. She smirked and put her forehead down into her hand. *How do I get myself into this shit ?*

"Bartender, check please." She dropped one leg off the bar stool, intending to gather her raincoat and go home with still enough time for a good six hours of sleep, when his hand on her shoulder stopped her cold. His grip was hard and strong. It was a grip that meant business, and she was not of the mindset to mess with a thing like that grip. She slid her leg back onto the stool and looked at his face. His stare was dark and cruel, but it was also just a touch sad. He was hurt by what she said.

"When I was four, it was the crayons. Was it gonna be magenta or cornflower? Yellow orange or Orange yellow? I was never wrong about what a kid was gonna grab next. Not one time. And you wanna know what my talent became? You wanna know what I can do with it now? Now I can see into people's minds. That's what I do - that's my job. And tonight my job is you, Jessie."

The Men...

Joe Chinderle

The men stare at the ship
slowly sinking into the dark abyss
soon all is quiet, all is still

The men in the rafts are lucky
others float freely in the waves
the silence is still in the air

Silence is broken by a terrible shriek
the once calm sea is now splashing wildly
the scream is gone, replaced by a red stain

The men scream and panic as the terror continues
slowly one by one they disappear
never to be seen again

Many call it white death, the man eater
Great white, a ferocious beast
it brings death and sorrow to those it encounters

Untitled #1

Joe Chinderle

Words revived by the eyes
pages are turned and stories are told
images dance of man unknown time
a problem or solution
the meaning will be found in the words.

Untitled #2

Joe Chinderle

Born in the soil
brought to life by the sun
seasons change and so does it
dying only to be born again.

Untitled #3
Joe Chinderle

Changing colors
flashing lights
the sound of a cat in heat
distorted speech
the police have arrived

Untitled #4
Joe Chinderle

Distracted thoughts
attention misdirected
the hand slipped
the finger cut
blood drips on the cutting board.

To Reach...
Joe Chinderle

To reach the inner depths of the mind
one must first think long and hard
about the life he had led before

The wind blows harshly against the skin
in the cold winter air
the traveler walks through the mental snowstorm uncertain of where or why he is going

As one takes the last breath of another
the creatures of the night breed
on fear and misery in an indiscriminate manner one's insignificant life has just slipped through the fingers of a total stranger.

Why must all things come to an end?
the very essence of life exists
on the doing of what's necessary before death.

Untitled #5
Joe Chinderle

Unconscious thoughts
subliminal words
unspoken sound
eyes speak of their own language

Untitled #6
Joe Chinderle

Bravest of all
slayer of dragon
a great fighter ace
the best musician
a traveler of many worlds
wake up, class is over.

Untitled #7
Joe Chinderle

Sleep is when we rest
sleep is an escape from reality
no sense of time or sound
we slumber peacefully and undisturbed
when we awake, the world could be a different place

Black
Joe Chinderle

A cloud of darkness
A feeling of dread
Depression swelling
The soul is fragile
The mind is wanting
Life ends death
And death ends life.

Mona Lisa
Dojna Corzine

my frame it strains to hold your
portrait draw down thinder to keep
your stillness for once like a photograph
i saw what I was missing at first light i
closed my eyes it was missing again
and i am still trying to make you
fit the stories to make you go back
to the flash of looking inside me
and caring what was there

Never Really Want to Know
Dojna Corzine

shatter my glass and in past tense my memory forget
i'm the victim of things that you've said to me water
my garden it's gone overnight
sever my soul to set everything right

Another Block
Dojna Corzine

is my meaning yours or not?
just planning's taking all i've got
another lie to pass the time
when love is still my only crime

Sleep
Dojna Corzine

tired was never the word for this feeling
growing so quickly its head hits the ceiling
father of monsters i never forgave
who would've known it's the last dream i'll save

Turn
Dojna Corzine

think of me coldly
like these days
i hide
the caves i know i dig with soft
pink fingertips
i grow glowworms to follow
to think of me
holding up the world
in the hollow of my heart
bursting
at the seams
to show you the movies are seen in my head
reel after reel after dream
think of me slowiy
and clouds will carry my soul
remembering the taste
of lemonade, ice cream, carnival fries
licking chlorine lips -
yours are like summertime -
my soul says it's mortal
and drowning
think of me cursed
the sister of demons
escaping me

Voodoo
Dojna Corzine

trying the magick i never believed
draw me a picture of things you don't see
the walls in the mirrors are holding up fine
i never imagined they never were mine

Ugly Seed Pod

Mary Honore Coughlen

A black thing is swirling sullenly,
in a hot, humid day,
The shell has an oily sheen but
is humpy-bumpy with hidden tumors
and dry even on this moist day.
My arm reaches up into the green-green
boughs of my afflicted tree...
a sharp prick of the pod bleeds me,
and I am angered...a stick...vengence...
WHACK! and the invading tumor falls
lying amongst clean flowers.
It must remove.

My Secret Lover...

Mary Honore Coughlen

My secret lover follows,
not more than a step behind,
ready to catch me if I should fall.

His lithe body ripples under his cloak,
he possesses the body of an acrobat,
it's the very cadence of his walk.

He ghosts beside me, ever watchful,
waiting, hoping I shall sucumb,
and lay my heart in his loving arms.

I've known of him from my conception,
he was there then as he is now,
his ever young countenance gently waiting.

Death simply wants to love me, as lovers do,
to know beyond simple sight, the feel and texture, of
body, mind and soul.

I shall not sucumb.

I Want To Feel...

Mary Honore Coughlen

I want to feel the warmth of summer,
as I stand on the lip of this blasting season.
I want to lie in the sun dappled gardens,
as cold air creeps through my clothing.
I want to feel the sweat slide down,
as I shudder when I've caught this chill.

Summer's Bounty...

Mary Honore Coughlen

Summers bounty throwing
shrunken shadows in winter's famine.
Dry shafts from summer grass,
thrust sharply to the sky.
Bright and cheerful Susans bounced,
and now they stand frozen at attention.
Bound fast in winters iron grip,
they await the gentle rains.

Summers Past

Shari Edmunds

Swimming lessons and
Cheeseburgers in the park
Homemade strawberry ice-cream and
Cherry kool-aid popsicles shimmering
Atop wooden toothpicks, while
Swinging on the front porch on
Damp, steamy Mississippi afternoons.
Poking holes in the plastic tops of
Coffee tins so that lumpy, brown
Toads could breathe during imprisonment
Picking fragile locus skins off of
Catawba trees.

Nanny and Papa.

Summer Illusions

Shari Edmunds

The music wafted all around me
Kissing my ears
  my shoulders
  my thighs
Exalted into the hot, breezy
Summer night
  I felt unrestrained
The damp scent of green saplings
And rich black soil swelled through
My body.
I was riveted to black shapes
Silhouetted by a surreal sky.
I was not alone in my utopianism
On this summer night.
As he took my hand and
Led me back inside
I could hear his heart pounding out
Rythms against his rib cage.

What My Community College Is Doing For Me

Pat Erickson

I doubted I would ever return to a college environment when I exchanged pursuing a Registered Nurse degree for marriage, employments at Boeing Company, and residence in the beautiful Seattle, Washington area. With perhaps some "reward" in mind, after dragging me away from that enriching educational opportunity in North Dakota and being partner to the addition of five children to our family within eight years, my husband was insistent that I'd one day experience the joy of skipping off to school again. Half-heartedly, I slipped that thought into my subconscious "sure, someday" file.

Although it was a "moving" and eventful situation to change addresses twelve times in nine years (Montana, North Dakota, Alabama, Louisiana, and back north again), a decision was made to shift over to employment in Minneapolis, Minnesota with the Honeywell Corporation. Stability in an excellent school system in Minnetonka was thus secured for these bright children of ours. How surprised we'd have been at our steadfastness if we'd seen we'd spend seventeen years at this same center of the cul-de-sac scene!

It became apparent in 1973 with food and clothing costs rising and the inception of fees for school activities that I needed to search for employment to enhance the family income. Our youngest was entering first grade and though I was devastated with loneliness after so many bustling years, I longed for adult interaction.

Rather regretting the interruption in my aforementioned college career, I scanned the ads while fully aware of my limited skills and knowledge. But look! Library worker wanted! I love books and reading! So began my eleven happy years of rising from shelver to desk clerk to caring for a small library by myself as a library assistant. By this time the oldest three were enrolled in college - which was possible only by the aid of scholarships, grants, loans, and campus work study programs.

Appreciating the opportunity for career advancement, my husband accepted a transfer to the Joliet Arsenal in Illinois. A bittersweet event, it meant pulling up our roots, separating ourselves from our four college kids (number one son now being in med school), and our daughter's last year of high school set in a new location.

Upon entering Joliet, my husband pointed out the sign directing the past to Joliet Junior College. I finally stepped foot on the campus <u>five years later</u> after working for a public library headquarters, and now applying for a temporary year-long position in the Learning Resource Center the spring of 1989. That fall, after a bit of fear and trepidation due to an interval of thirty-one years since my last class experience, I registered for American Literature with tuition covered under employment. Actually remembering to purchase my textbook, I eagerly approached this special moment with alertness and pounding of heart. I loved my teacher! Rejoiced in my syllabus! And although the reading assignments might be demanding for my own schedule, I just KNEW I'd complete them on time and type my own term paper!

Each class has been a "favorite," fulfilling my joy of learning, and, especially Speech and Broadcasting, is preparing me to one day step into a dream I've envisioned of a late-night devotional

radio program for those troubled with struggles and sleeplessness. My six year journey at JJC was an interacting episode with all age groups, participating a bit in student government and the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. I now soar into another new adventure of my husband's retirement with confidence that I'm attaining a long-awaited goal and can tackle new challenges.

Beacon of Light

Pat Erickson

Harbor, haven -
at last! Safety found.
Everywhere else
beams bombarding sound.
Here - serenity, hope
and comfort abound.
Truly in You
is my harbor found.

Aerial Artistry

Pat Erickson

Steel wings glistening with the
sun's shimmering reflections,
The jet's journey crosses heaven's
expansive canvas;
leaving lavish strokes of
soft, pearl, swirling furls,
filmy, feathery, transparent trails.
Eventually, these spirals are converted -
stretching, straying
sheer opalescent tapers;
now distantly fading
into lucid vapors.

Why Don't We Get Together?

Pat Erickson

Scandinavians have a reputation for not being very communicative (especially men). Not that they plan it this way - they just seem oblivious to the fact that they're lacking in this respect. Perhaps they are just so busy thinking everything over, sort of "mulling" the situation about in their minds. Okay, so I'm Norwegian, but it's my Swedish husband, Jerry, that I want to relate this to.

The incident I'm alluding to happened on a clear, hot July day. The moving van left the day before, loaded to the hilt with seventeen years' accumulation from this Minnesota home shared with five children, a nephew, baby grandson, a twelve-year-old Golden Retreiver and a young, velvety-soft gray cat.

Upon tidying up the empty, echoing house, I felt a regretful tug at my heart, and the corresponding lump in my throat made it a bit difficult to swallow the tuna sandwich our neighbor had so kindly served us at her table. One son would be at this neighbor's until he left in a month for college. How could we be splitting up our family like this - leaving all but the youngest, Kristi, up here in med school and jobs because of my husband's transfer to Illinois.

Our two-vehicle caravan ready to leave the cul-de-sac, Jerry jumped in the camper van he converted several years ago. Old Butchie Dog trustingly follows his master. Kristi, Tasha Cat and I take up the rear in my white Omni; neither of us has air conditioning.

"Goodbye, Jean. Thanks for everything! 'Bye, guys. See you when you bring Dad's car down in a few weeks. Oh, look, Kristi - there's Jill. She wants to say 'bye. Oh, we'll miss you, too, Jill. Tell your mom 'bye too. Where's Jerry? Oh, he must have seen us stop and is waiting 'round the corner and down the hill. Mmm, not here. Did he go right or left to leave the neighborhood? Is he taking Highway 494 around Minneapolis or Highway 12 through the center? JERRY! I was supposed to follow you, remember? You've never even discussed the route to Joliet with me! Never even showed me on the map! I vaguely remember him mentioning Madison when he was talking to Uncle Don."

"Let's take 494 a few miles - can't miss that big green and yellow tank! Hmm, don't see him.

Must have gone the other way.

"What do you do when you're separated? Think. Go back to the spot you last were together, right? Okay - stay calm.

"Did Jerry call or loop back, Jean? No? Well, do you mind if I wait around a bit, just in case he remembers this smart rule? Thanks. I know he'll come back when he sees I'm not following."

(Jerry: "That's her white car behind me. Wasn't sure, there's several tailing me. What? Why's she passing me? Oh, it's not her. But I don't dare stop; have to make it before dark. Looks like I might soon have generator problems and that could affect my lights.")

"It's been a half-hour and he hasn't called. I have no idea how long it takes to get to Joliet. I'll go to Highway 12 this time and will call you, Jean, when I enter Wisconsin to see if he's called.

"Oh, Tasha, will you quit that mournful me-owing? I know you're hot. We can't open the window or you'll leap out. No, Kristi, you may not take a turn at driving. I'd be too nervous just sitting.
(None of the white cars is Pat yet? Oh, well, she'll catch up sooner or later. I can't stop.)

"Keep watching, Kristi, to see if he's pulled over somewhere on the shoulder. Wouldn't you think he'd be worried? Dear God, I pray he's not had an accident! Here we are across the river. Any word from Jerry yet, Jean? None? Have Matt call all the hospitals around. How could they even get in touch with me? I'll call tonight again.

"Kristi, check the atlas. Anything different happen around Madison? East to Milwaukee, south to Chicago? Makes sense to take the Chicago route.

"Here's Wisconsin Dells. One more call, that's it. He's never called at all? Guess he's hyper-concerned, huh? I just hope we have no car trouble - that's why were to travel together, after all! No, you can't drive, Kristi!

"This construction is so dangerous after dark. Why do they have to string such bright lights all over - and that infernal, incessant banging keeps me awake, sure, but it's so annoying with this one-lane bumper-to-bumper traffic! (I won't inform her that my contacts are gunking over and my eyes are sticking together or she'll insist I let her drive)... Okay, a quick McDonald's stop, bathroom, and on the road again. Oh dear. Here's that Chicago split. Stay right. Whew, bet we're over half-way there. What's the next big decision? How to branch off to Joliet. From Midway, we took 55 to Joliet, but I certainly don't want to go clear into the Chicago mess just to find Highway 55 to traipse to Joliet. Let's ask at the next toll booth. Go south at the next one, 59? Bless your heart, lady. God bless you! Barrington - remember your brother Steve's buddy moved here from Minnetonka a few years ago? Fox Valley. Plainfield. Hey, this Kerr plant looks familiar. Think we looked for homes here. Shorewood, ooh, here's Black Road. I remember that. Left here, I'd say. My land, it's Homestead. We're down at the end, good old cul-de-sac again. What time is it? 12:30! I'm dead, should have been here by ten. What if Jerry never made it? I don't have a key - great! What else could go wrong?

"I don't believe it! There's the camper in the driveway? We never saw him once the whole trip. Probably just drove here lickety-split with no thought about us. I'm just shaking from exhaustion. Ring the bell.

(Oh, you finally made it!) He is so groggy from sleep. Bawl! Bawl!!What were you thinking, driving off when the plan was to travel together and we never even made it a block! I DIDN'T KNOW THE WAY!

(BLAH, BLAH) What? You're so disappointed because you wanted my homecoming to be so joyous because you worked all summer before I moved down building a deck and Kristi kept it a secret?

OH.

See what I mean. He's just not very talkative.

I do have this concern now, though. You see, Jerry's retiring this spring. We're selling the house after eleven years' accumulation and returning to the lake country of Minnesota. We'll be driving our RV with his faithful five-year-old Cockapoo, Rusty, shadowing him. (We bought him because I love fluffy, little lambs. Little does the dog care.) I'll be following in my maroon mini-van with 15-year-old Tasha Cat who'll be hyperventilating and screeching like a banshee all the blasted way. I'll be sitting higher and have a better view ahead. I have air conditioning. I've grown more mature by now. My little Kristi is now a mom herself.

Now, what lake did he say we were moving to?

Why We See Rain

David Haynes

For what is the truth to rain
I believe it's God's tears of pain.
His heinous tears are tears of love,
illustrously falling from a heaven above.
And that is why he is to cry,
for no other reason why.

Some people on earth care not question
what God's reason may be -
and their careless thoughts will never clearly see.
For earth does not exist to eternity.

Yet man's actions destroy the earth
so thoughtlessly.
Until it's too late -
people's actions will remain and that
is why we still see rain.

Hidden in a Forest

David Haynes

The pathway leads within
a night creature speaks
an unknown shadow peaks
at hidden deer within

Some will rest; some will flee
but one deer lies beneath tree
its lighted by moon's silvery glow
for being protected is to know

it wakes to sleep...
then faces another day
searched as a prey
maybe live another day.

Fearful Fog

David Haynes

A covering curtain appears
later is disappears
it's enclosing us within its shield
with hovering clouds in your field
seen in a distance near or far
it seals us in its jar
presented in the day or night
for it will always leave a forbidden fright.

My Everlasting Mountain

David Haynes

In my youth I climb a mountain to be a king -
A king of the mountain.
I'm raised to the top and pushed down
Like the button on a fountain.
Again I climb to be a king -
A king of the mountain.
Cutting through life -
With a dulled knife.
For it never ends nor does it stop,
I'm always striving to the top.

Unjustified

David Haynes

Rays of light shine
Sun cast shadow's bright
Upon a desolate floor
Girl lies so evermore
Why is she here?
Her eyes present fear.

This place she's in makes her full of flight
the scariest time for her can be seen
for it is a dark and a dreary night
covering her legs are a pair of jeans
and her top is a white jailmate's shirt,
a pallid face without even a speck of dirt

Meanwhile the girl's brown eyes present fear
They wander across the room awaiting doom
Eyes question the system which is filthy
For she is not the one guilty
Men guard her gate of ending fate
with a false believed reason of hate
she hopes time will change her fate.

Flannel Sheets

Jeff Hicks

I held her
her breathing rising and settling under my arms
her body curled up upon me
I could feel her skin
goosebumps rising where I gently touched
A small smile across her face as a dream passed by
as we slowly waited for dawn

Goodbye Time

Jeff Hicks

You have no meaning anymore
Tick tock tocktock ticktockticktock
The clock chimes
Another day awaits

Mystic Memory

Jeff Hicks

I held you in the secret garden
our thoughts were made as one
I told you of my hidden pasture
that lay in the rising sun
So walk with me through the pillared dreamland
I'll help you find the way
Just close your eyes and take my hand
And remember yesterday

Tempo

Jeff Hicks

Rythym dissolution
total confusion
what's the solution
to this pollution?
Iambic infusion!

New Religion

Jeff Hicks

I touch you
wanting to feel your inner desire
through the politics of lust
I wish to offer the holy sacrament
from the heat on our skin
from the fire in our sex
Hot, hot, hotter
Steam beginning to rise
Baptism by sweat
Kaleidoscope colors filtering in
In the stained, pink cathedral
Upon the altar of sensuality

Untitled

Jeff Hicks

Your picture
Tacked to my corkboard
I remember you

Anticoda

Jeff Hicks

Flowers bloom within a dream
The tailor sews an endless seam
The thoughts continue
and tend to drift
In the chasm of sleep
An endless rift

Chilled Over Ice

Jeff Hicks

Your coldness abounds
Treating me to the tinges of frostbite
Ever present fogging breath
Reminds me of who you are
Chancing the blizzard before me
I dive again into your snowdrift
As once again,
My mind goes numb

Afternoon

Jeff Hicks

A December day
birds sort the seeds
on the weathered feeder
Their breath
puffing minutely in front of them
A cat
watching from the neighbor's window
knowing they are out of reach
curls contentedly up
his pensive tail
Flip Flip Flip Flip Flip
The birds scatter
and the cat closes his eyes

A 10 Word Wish

Jeff Hicks

Beautiful girl
I don't know you
I wish I did

Banana Seat

Jeff Hicks

Flying in a metalflake blur
pedals pumping furiously
A two-wheeled trip through childhood

Present Past

Jeff Hicks

Light spots on the wall
where the pictures used to hang
Scratches on the floor
where the furniture was moved
Echo in the room
my crying of leaving childhood

I the Dog

Jeff Hicks

I the dog
you bring me dinner
I want to scratch
and curl up next to you at night
I the man
I bought you dinner
I want a kiss
and curl up next to you at night

Polyester Loser

Jeff Hicks

Ey baby
why don't chu talk to me
I know you want it
they all do
Dey all say "we want Louie"
and I give it to em.
Dey always come back fo more
So baby, ow bout a kiss?
You probably want dat too.
You like my chains eh?
Ow bout my cufflinks?
Got em at -ey, where you's goin baby?
Don't you want me?

Country

Jeff Hicks

Old fence
Rungs weathered
and dry
Greyed from age
Severing the horizon

Faith

Jeff Hicks

Love
from above
Pain
from below
Purgatory
now

Spoken Action

Robin Kintz

What your heart speaks of -
can be voiced much more clearly...
through simple actions.

Best Things In Life

Robin Kintz

The best things in life -
come natural and quite free...
how 'bout misery?

Romance

Robin Kintz

A full moon
A lofty breeze
Two fading shadows
against the trees
The forest dim
A beach bright
The feeling true
The moment right
The quickened pace
A silent hush
Love's understanding
A sudden rush

Silhouette of Grey

Robin Kintz

Fear
is a silhoutte if grey
It smothers one in sweat
Fear like sweat... stings the eyes
bitter is the taste
Sounding off as your heartbeat
drumming in your ears
The shadowy feeling as if lasting forever
creates nervous hesitancy

Money Talks

Robin Kintz

If money can talk -
and talk is cheap, is the price...
paid for money - cheap?

Modest Pride

Robin Kintz

Little pride I have -
I can't copy Earth's beauty...
attain a mts. height

Purposeful Choice

Robin Kintz

Choose life with purpose -
for your choice affects others
and your destiny.

Born Dreamer

Robin Kintz

You cannot tell me you do not dream
for everyone dreams of something of someone
Nobody dreams of nothing.
If one does, then they themselves...
consist of a dream.

The Morning Dew

Robin Kintz

Illuminated...drops of dew
cling
a crawling hesitancy
off the pale roses petal
Falling silent
The appearance of clear pear cut diamonds.

True Freedom

Robin Kintz

There's nothing as wild as spirit
There's nothing more free than a soul
If one is broken by capture...the other
will leave one cold.

The Willow

Robin Kintz

The sparkling stream
laughs
as it freely flows over sandblasted rock
The zigzag course slides
between a willow's roots
The many branches dipped towards the warm earth sway gently within slight breezes
The gigantic willow
whispers out its sorrows...while
the leaping water frolics
merrily on its predestination...

Vengeful Phrase

Robin Kintz

"Nemo me impune lacesshit," Shane spoke
with bedeviled eyes. Revenge shall be a challenge
of wit... I will not, shall not let them by.
Shane lived by these very words
and by these words he would die.
He never ignored, gave up, gave in...
to any who would try
to ruin his character, mark his name with fault...
take him to his grave, beat, bribe, or insult.
Shane was one strong man who handled a gun.
Shane pocketed a blade and was always on the
run. Quiet and cautious...out on his own since
15.
His rep grew as one who was crafty and mean.
As his reputation had grown,
so did the news of his death...
shot in the back while gambling...the folk hero
had breathed his last breath.
Many had admired him and now
have lost him...
bitterness in their tears.
A man of honor, of great pride.
The townfolk since have likened to his cautious
ways...and live bythe words for which he died.

New Year's Eve

Angela Knezevich

I kept thinking he must be different.
I swore he was the one.
We found ourselves in a room alone.
The door shut.
I wasn't going to back out now.
Feelings and impulses rages.
His blue eyes stared through me.
"I love you," he said.
So I gave him what I could
never again have.

It Snowed Today

Angela Knezevich

It snowed and snowed till
the powdery film covered the
tracks of everything we ever did.
And it left us a clean, unblemished past
for everything we will

Multi-colored Thoughts

Angela Knezevich

Crazed multi-colored thoughts stain my mind. They
bleed into every corner,
surrounding anything good with bad.
Dirty hues that corrupt my being
and overpower my decency.
Thoughts that drip, then overflow
over once established boundaries.
I laugh with the devil,
then cry in shame.
Colors that mask what I feel
and what I've felt.
Reflections of today and yesterday,
some brilliant and some not so.
Colors that are blinding,
yet see all.
Multicolored thoughts - they're always there.
Just sometimes hiding.

Reunion

Rick L.

You were gone so long.
My heart grew cold.
My tears flowed like rain,
on a cool April mornin'.
Now that you've returned,
my life is filled withg light.
My heart beats wild again.
My tears all dry again.
Then suddenly the world is silent.
All is still.
Time becomes frozen.
We are the only two people on earth,
as we become locked in a warm embrace.

Reality Check

Rick L.

Welcome to REALITY.
Here are our selections of the week.
Jobs that suck. (*most popular selection*)
Social lives. (*only available in sizes x-small and small)*
Dysfunctional relationships. (*available in all sexual preferences)*
Money. (*due to the overwhelmning demand for this item, we are unable to fill orders at this time)*
May I take your order?

What is Love

Rick L.

She's the first thing you think of
early in the morning.

She haunts you in your dreams
all through the night.

She creeps into every other thought
through all parts of the day.

Decisions, Decisions

Rick L.

Should we drink Coke or Pepsi?
Should we take it regular or decaf?
Should we smoke them light or menthol?
Should we read the Tribune or the Sun Times?
Should we listen to rock, country, or rap?
Should we bag it in paper or plastic?
Should we get fries or onion rings?
Should we buy tapes, cds, or vinyl?
Is it gonna be sugar or Nutra-Sweet?
Is it live or is it Memorex?
Jeez!
Life can get complicated, huh?

Experience the Power

Rick L.

With a volcanic blast from the bass drum, the stadium went black. The short, screeching guitar riffs started to rip through the sheer curtain that fell before the evening's wicked hosts. Then without warning came the exodus of the night, the beginning of the first song.

The guitar's electric fury tore at my eardrums. The drum blasts felt like small grenades hitting me in the chest with a steady repetition. My screaming voice fought to tear through the energy that filled the air. My veins pulsated with the adrenaline that had seemed to replace my blood. My mind fused with that of the singer's as he preached his gospel-like lyrics to his followers.

Suddenly the crowd self-destructed into a mass of chaos and confusion. Bodies bounced up and down, hair whipped through the air, people were being lifted up and carried across the hands of the crowd like offerings to their heavy metal god. Then a circle opens amidst the haze of bodies. People jump into the circle and start throwing themselves into one another with no regard or concern for their own safety. Yes, it is anarchy.

Two hours and forty-five minutes later, the band gently began the first chords to their final song. The crowd that once was a boisterous, seething mob has now faded into complete silence. The piano's music soars around the arena. Lighters ignite everywhere until it feels like you are up with the stars. People sway back and forth as the music's hypnotic tones take control of their souls. Then it ends.

The show is over. The music has ended. His electrical sermon is over. The crowd is left breathless, speechless, and in some cases in intense pain and stiffness. Soon adrenaline levels return to normal and the energy that once coursed through the air has now dissipated, leaving only a feeling of awe among the people. Eventually, people's breathing is regulated and words return to their lips, but the pain still lingers in their muscles and joints. It will serve as a lasting reminder of the night they esperienced the powere of the Nine Inch Nails!

Untitled

Rick L.

Twinkle, Twinkle, little star,
I wish I could be where you are.
Watch all my worries drift away.
Discard the routine of day to day.
For in your world, the day is night,
just twinkling, twinkling, burning bright.

For You

Rick L.

You pry into my mind.
You enter my thoughts.
My heart is the lock,
to the secrets of my soul.

You now hold the key.

So come inside,
and know me,
for me.
For what lies beyond my heart,
now belongs to you.

The Cheshire Cat

Rick L.

His bright yellow eyes,
His sly and sinister grin,
His crazed, playful soul.

Who Am I?

Rick L.

Mother,
Father,
Teachers,
Preachers,
Heretics,
Unbelievers,
Destroyers of individualism,
I will be,
who I want to be.
Not who you expect me to be.

Crimson Dawn

Rick L.

Rainbow in the sky,
up where the birds fly,
clouds fluffy white,
sun burning bright,
over the ground's greenest hue.

Suddenly all turns white...

Smoke fills the air,
flames burst everywhere,
skies burning red,
looking down on the dead.

Enough is Enough

Rick L.

Street violence and juvenile delinquency are rising at an alarming rate. If something is not done about this soon, I fear for the future of this country. The possibilities for a safe and healthy future for our children are becoming fewer and fewer with every new incident of street violence every day. Consequently, the possibilities of a future plagued with this same poisonous violence are becoming more and more possible.

I believe in ten or twenty years that our society wil have slowly reverted back to one similar to that of the Old West. Everyone will own a firearm of some sort and will be a lot less insecure about using it. A concerned citizen walking down the street who happens upon a gangbanger will not hesitate to completely do away with him for good. The citizen's only reason for this will be to cleanse the streets of one less scummy gang member. His conscious will not bother him in the least because that kind of thing will be happening every hour of every day. People will be killing each other on the streets for reasons ranging from race to group affiliation to pure and simple vengeance.

With all the chaos this will create on the streets, the police will lose all power over their territories and members of this society who wish to try to regain control of things will spawn into vigilante enforcers. Just like in the times of Billy the Kid or Jesse James, these vigilantes will be as ruthless as they have to be to take down the scum that will have taken over the streets.

Political powers will have no power in this future society. There will be no elections because only about twenty-five percent of the population will actually vote for someone to be in charge, or someone to at least try to take charge of all the anarchy society will have evolved into. Dictators will rise up from the clouds of chaos and turn the already violent streets into war zones. Eventually, society will become a post-apocalyptic battle of good versus evil and people's humanity will waste away to insanity.

World powers will intervene until they find that it is a hopeless and lost cause. The formerly titled United staes will become a dumping ground for other countries to dump their scum of society on and be rid

of them. This will continue until our neighboring nations get sick and tired of acknowledging the existence of this wasted mass of land that had become mothing more than a breeding ground for the world's unwanted occupants. Whan this happens, nations of the world will have no second thoughts about cleansing this blemish off the face of the earth with a nuclear bomb.

The fallout from the explosion will poison the surrounding parts of the oceans, leaving a permanent reminder of the poisoned land that once rested on their surface. Ocean travel will become more and more dangerous as the poisoned water spreads over the remaining parts of the waters. With the increased danger from the contamination of the water, ocean travel will become nonexistent and remaining countries that are separated by ocean will form large communication gaps. Also, the world's water supply will be poisoned to the point where all ocean life will die. Our water supply will diminish as well, leaving us no other means to satisfy the human need for water. People of the world will die off like icicles in July and the earth will become a huge, uninhabited ball of mud and water floating lifelessly in space. Of course until other life in the universe sees that it is uninhabited and sees that it suits their need for a new civilization, then.....oh, just forget it! You should get the idea by now.

As you can see, street violence must stop before it gets out of control. This is my planet too! Personally, I don't want to have it taken over by alien inhabitants. Enough is enough! Stop the violence, before it's too late.

Using Rhymes

Tracie Laczynski

I was talking to you
When out of the blue
I focused in
I focused out
And immediately traveled
To your brain
Through your mouth
And from there did I see
The most wondrous things
    A hen
    A rooster
    A fox
    And a cow,
        Old Mother Hubbard and
        Little Boy Blue,
        Cats in the cradle,
        And crows in the stew
Then imagine my surprise
When they all quoted rhymes!
So I squinted my eyes,
Clicked my heels three times
And ended up...
In Kansas?

Four Lines

Tracie Laczynski

I called and you did not answer.
I cried and you did not hear.
I turned and you walked away.
I called and you did not answer.

In Hiding

Tracie Laczynski

This will fade.
As all fades.
In time.
This piece of sand,
Like all pieces of sand,
Was once a mountain.
This butterfly, Like all butterflies,
Was once small and fuzzy
And now flashes its colors
For all to see
This mind,
Like all minds,
Hides something from me,
Like the caterpillar hides the butterfly
And the sand the mountain,
As if it were its own secret self.
Will I ever find that secret?

Merrily Play...

Tracie Laczynksi

Merrily play your pipes little man
I cannot see you clearly
From where I stand
But I know your tune
From long ago
Those innocent days
Before I touched this earth
Those childhood days
When I barely knew much at all
I longed then
I long now
Where every day is limitless and
Every dream reality
Where eternity is finally understood
As forever and a day

We Are Woven

Tracie Laczynski

I dreamed
I walked too long with the
Thread in my fingers
Weaving myself
Weaving others
Weaving my own
Into others
One of three
Three in one
My fingers creating
My eyes watching
The feel of unending power
Of silken thread
Beneath my fingertips
The nothingness of Zen
The faith if Christians
The continuation of Jews
The "insane ones"
The inventive ones
Those who will know of love
Those who will know of pain
All of these I felt
All of these I know

Thought for the Days

Tracie Laczynksi

I shall not curse when the day is done,
Nor shall I cry for pity.
Instead I'll merrily sit and wonder
Of the thoughts and statements of tomorrow.
For today is done as tomorrow will never be
And as the sun rests its head from my weary world It
but rises in another.

She

Tracie Laczynski

What beauty has become
So ensconced within a human body
As lithe as a cat
As majestic as the aurora borealis
So red and brown and black
So knowing as the redwoods

She
  Once a solid form
She
  Now liquid and vanishing
She
  Made of the earth
She
  An arrow through the sky
She
  Part of an ancestry steady and proud

Breakfast

Julie Lemmon

Caucasian toast.
African-American coffee.
What color is racism and how does it taste?
Can you drink it?
Can I have a bite? Never mind, it makes me sick.
It consumes us.
Just as we consume it
and digest it. It should be eradicated,
just as we eradicate waste.

A Conversation with Me

Julie Lemmon

Give me rest,
anxious mind.
Give me thoughts
which are not mine.

Make me think
of places new.
Give me strength
to make it through.

Handle hearts
as though they're mine.
Make me brave,
and true, and kind.

Rise above
the evil 'round.
Help me use
the things I've found.

Answer questions,
give me truth.
Make me see,
and give me proof.

Hurt me only
when I need.
Heal me only
when I bleed.

See me only
as I am.
Make things easy
as you can.

Use your wisdom,
anxious mind,
things get easier,
as you'll find.

Listen close to
every sound,
I promise I won't
let you down.

Promises
get broken, true,
but this one
I will keep to you.

You Just Might

Julie Lemmon

One tear ran down my cheek today,
It took me by surprise.
I touched it, my finger wet,
and then I wondered why.

I thought all day about that tear,
it made me weak inside,
I'd always thought myself so strong,
how could I ever cry?

That silly salty tear of mine,
gnawing at my brain.
I thought about that tear some more.
I thought about the pain.

I thought that tear was lonely,
waiting to get through.
It just wanted to be wanted,
like I'm wanting you.

I'm glad I gave that tear a chance,
one chance is all it got.
I think about that tear sometimes,
I think it meant a lot.

It meant that I still care for you,
a chance that still may be,
that I just might still love you,
that you just might love me.

On Alliteration

Julie Lemmon

Seeking psalms of solitude, sounds surround me.
Songs softly, sensually seek my ears,
and catch them.

As Bright as the Moon

Julie Lemmon

If only I were more like the moon, I would be beautiful to all eyes which settle on my glowing skin. When I reach a sliver all eyes would either turn in terror or gaze in wonder and dream of the day in which they, too, could become a beautiful sliver, dancing in the sky, open to the imagination, inviting attention yet hiding away when too much is received, creating monsters in childrens' eyes who see the beauty all in a different light. They catch the wonder and put it in a jar, not knowing that when the jar is finally opened the wonder has died and the moon doesn't shine as brightly any more.

Tell Me About Yourself

Julie Lemmon

I'm sitting, thinking, wondering.
Thinking, wondering, dreaming.
The dreams are never ending,
the end is never far.
Far away from everything,
everything is so vague.
The vagueness is so clear,
clearly there is truth.
The truth is never told.
Tell me about yourself.
I'm sitting, thinking, wondering.

The Abyss
Allen Markus

Life and Love to Live
To breathe but not to be
To wonder, go unexplored
psychosis, sorrow
Pit of despair
Brothers and Sisters
Already there
On the edge, hold myself
Reach out to them
Too little, too late
Can't see, can't grab
Pool of tears
Pool of blood

Time Scope
Allen Markus

Alluded to the past
Trapped in the present
Escaped into the future
To love, to die
To hate, to live
Never, forever
Sometimes, No times
Help for the helpless
Poor, poorer
Rich, richer
Illusion, Trap, Escape
Life nothing
Love nothing
If both do not exist as one

Fate
Allen Markus

One final breath
till oblivion, blest
One last heartbeat
till the great rest
One last touch
of lips so sweet
till I, my treasure meet
One life led
failure, defeat
more than once, though did victory
I meet
Moonlight felt
Sunlight grew
Till eternity I see
One life, One truth
In my hands
No regrets

Sunny Day
Allen Markus

The sunshine shined down on my heart
it blackened my soul
to a bitter world
a casting shadow
that lurks in a heart
The moonlight freed my brain
to an infinite desire of pleasure
beyond pain, beyond hope
beyond the filth of humanness

Kalphornia
Allen Markus

A cloud of brilliance on an eastern shore
How far away towards a bright blue sea
Orange, red, white, and blue
Swirling together spot of pain
utterance undone
beautifully speckled
by the hand of God
peace, joy, and freedom

Schism
Allen Markus

A Heart that bleeds
a bind that ties
a circle of stupidity
shrouded by a constant insanity
defamation
Thy name rings clear
upon the ears of your mind
ignorance learned
ignorance achieved

Time for Tea
Allen Markus

Stopping by
for just a while
not too long
a minute's span
only time
to say goodbye
no time to say
hello

Haiku
Jennifer Martin

Deserted alley
Cold needle piercing his skin
Hell's cruel flames await

Life torn to pieces
By his own devil on earth
Changing his sweet ways

Chilling heart inside
Frozen by uncaring time
Left on an iceberg

Devastation
Loneliness, fear, depression
Devoured poor heart

Virginity
Jennifer Martin

The girl walked along the beach
and found a single sheet of paper
beautifully colored:
magnificently simple,
yet unique.

She picked up the blank sheet
and began to draw,
shifting its natural form
changing it in every way possible
until it was completely soaked
full of someone else's ink
from someone else's pen
transformed
into a useless
piece
of ink

to be placed in another pen
to be used to scribble
upon another original sheet.

Untitled
Jennifer Martin

The tall stranger strolled in
sure of his selfless, crisp
caring voice - all-showing
A true friend: no disguise.
His current victim sits upon no pedestal,
bright sunlight shines through her
clear empty eyes
as he begins his latest killing.
Instantly his prey is charmed by his
pleasant manner, and smile of false
admiration, and with his righteous
claws of love he murders her ego.
He holds it high at first, above
clouds and rainy days, to the point of
bliss: he suddenly disappears, leaving
her helpless to fall
to the painful ground
of
reality.

Authority
Jennifer Martin

she walks silently towards authority
i hear and see someone spit on her shoe
missing her face
it would have been okay if it had
covered the longing expression
permanently engraved on her soul

i wish i could wipe the fear off your mind
and say bless you
and ask forgiveness

but why do you slap me
don't you know it hurts
when needles poke your arm
you will crash into pieces
and i won't laugh as i so promised
i'll capture a tear in my mouth
as i place a rose on the grave
i dug for you.

Morning Downcast
Jennifer Martin

I awake at dawn
to see no sun.
No brilliant light,
no piercing flames.
I go back to sleep.

I awake at noon,
noticing no blue sky.
Only a somber gray,
rainbows gone away.
I go back to dream.

I awake at dusk,
strolled the silence,
Trees stand still as
mind races by.
No flowers blushing.
No life in their eyes.
I drag myself through
the day...the sky turns
a downcast black and
I realized you were
gone.

Answerlessness
Jennifer Martin

You tell me
I am your world
I worry about pollution.
As I am your stars, sun, and moon
the light is dim -
In your romantic attempts,
you compare me to a summer's day.
My eyes melt from the humidity
bring raining tears of spring.
As I am your air,
I strain not to cough -
You tell me I am your reason, your everything
Why do you so often tell me how much life sucks?

As I am your sight,
do I fall from blindness -
As I am your ears,
does the screaming ever end -

Beecher Street

Kim Ormond

Absently, she wipes away a crumb and places her elbow back onto the table. A tiny speck of yellow, leftover coffeecake now resides unmovingly on the floor. A perfect match as the kitchen's linoleum is also yellow, tired with age. The crumb stares and she turns away, intending to take care of it later, ignoring with faked indifference the broom that lives in the corner. It is waiting. It eyes her accusingly like some rigid, testy soldier.

Glancing sideways, a glimpse of the lavatory commands immediate attention. The sink with its rust spots that grow only more pronounced, the rub, grayish and dirty-looking, unbudging scale and stains coating the sides, and the toilet. The toilet that no matter how hard she scrubs, bleach eating fingers till they're pulpy, retains the stench of human waste. Thousands of flushes by probably hundreds of families. A shudder passes through.

"I love you, honey."

Her gaze does not wander from the porcelain receptacle, even as she feels him, hand on her arm, gliding gently. Taking from immediate consciousness the painful years that have become so etched into features as if worrisome craftsmen labor hard at work. Tiny chisels cleaving, carving highways on the landscape of her expression. Fingertips intensify their movements, understated yet more powerful than a solid punch. Tremblings course over stroked flesh, bringing to mind thoughts that would otherwise repulse her. She doesn't object to it, being with him, one of the few men who has ever made her feel sexy as opposed to ugly.

His tongue slides over her right eyelid, seeking to atone for a life of anger and dysfunction. She hates that term - dysfunction. It has become the new catchword for the day. All wrapped up neat and tidy, a million scarring traumas, a million chewing hurts eating away at those touched by its presence whether outrageously brutal or insidious and hidden well. She hates the word; she hates almost everything. She watches the toilet.

The tank is making that noise again, a constant staticky utterance. He has forgotten to push the handle twice, and now the Ghost of Flushes will haunt until appeased by her corrective touch. A sly smile touches lips, its a secret little nickname known to no other. All part of the existence unseen by the world and making up the distractions that keep life tolerable.

A hesitant meow issues from the bedroom, and she lifts her gaze to watch with interest the unfolding scenario. The man's stroking movements grow more intense, the large tabby emerging from shadows steps forward with jumpy little beats. It hisses slightly before turning a tail to the unwanted rival. The man merely chuckles, the cat likes him too despite actions to the contrary. Just hasn't learned to share.

Winding about the woman's legs, the sleek feline prods limbs to stretch in leisurely fashion, toilet relinquishing its fascinating hold. It's enjoyable, the brief respite, attention given only to her. Soft, orange hairs massaging skin, calloused yet sensitive fingers trickling slowly across shoulders, neck, a breast. They both want something, but it is really no bother. A small portion of food from a can, a little bit of "a little bit" performed on a mattress soft with use. She knows he won't want it now, not right this very minute or even hour, but eventually. She won't mind. They are family. Hand picked from the world at large.

"You know, hon, you are the best. Every man out there is eating his heart away, wishing it was him you came home to."

A compliment, but one whose intention is entirely off base. As usual. He wouldn't know the meaning of a real, unconditional expression of love if it jumped up and bit him on the ass. The only reason he can make her feel sexy is that goddamn name of his - Angel - a fatal (for hearts like hers anyway) induction to the world of cherubs. That and the fact he's so damn striking. With cut, lean lines - crisp almost - and some of the attitude just has to rub off. She wonders what his appearance will be in twenty years; an aging pig growing a potbelly in need of a shave and a good head-to-toe bath. A greasy weasel-face like the perverts with the thin black spectacles who cruise the red light district wanting to place their sagging bodies on thirteen year olds. She shakes her head - the contemplation is making her ill. Yes, Angel too will spoil like fruit that has aged to rottenness, his touch disfigured into the slimy prods of just another groping man, reminding her of family despite that is what he basically is. The irony hurts.

"Oh, Jesus." She stands abruptly and paces the floor. Four pinpoints stare with unnamed expectations as the picture show begins. Visions of forks, spoons inserted and then sanitary pads placed tight to stop the.... Endless carping, telling her she's no good. Skittering about her peripheral sight. She goes from hot to cold. A common occurrence.

"Bastard!" She screams and throws dishes, watching tableware bounce off the walls. They are plastic; Angel refuses to allow any more china. With mincing steps that resemble a dog in shame, a disappointed masseur retreats from the room, taking the cat with.

Fingers encircle the spot near her right temple - a familiar state of being, like a friend almost. The only stability in a haze of emotions. She wonders where she could have gone so bad, living this life, digging into the rut of yet another stubborn circumstance. Angel and his forever schizoid devotion, different by his very attitude but still a piece of repetitive games. Games that no matter what the self-imposed warnings, talks of keeping sane, always start out so damn okay - she full of life and promise, he pledging good intentions, both sincere in the vows whispered from soft lips, honestly bearing no malice. Before the wear of time and the grating of small, annoying habits interweaves to create a chafing like glass grinding beneath eyelids. It is an episode when she truly feels free, a young giggly girl in love or rather in love with the concept of being in love. Strong on her own but still missing a completing presence.

"Get your ass in here! Don't you dare abandon me!" Raging seethes to a hideous pitch, so unnatural are the emotions, so quick to swing from opposing ends of the spectrum. No one should feel like this. "I said, get your ass in here! I'm not some freak show you're too repulsed to see!!"

A pair of deep browns, glancing up from a submissive

face, peek hesitantly from behind a door frame. The whites are showing in that endearing way he has perfected. Enough to make any woman go ga-ga. but she is not a woman right now.

"Bastard!" The dish goes flying, smacking him on the side of the face, rebounding off wood and coming back for a second hit. She laughs hysterically; the monster is loose. With a grumble that is not quite a swear, the pelted partner retreats back to where he came. This is going to take patience, working the female like a primed pump.

Slopping herself back into a chair, the woman throws hands on the table, cradling cheekbones and again toying with the spot near her temple. She will have privacy for at least a few more minutes and goes back to ruminating, losing a sob at recollections of expectations denied. Setting up house with images of eros and heartfelt love, a waiting little slate just eager for adornment.

Just eager for scars is more like it.

And then him, completion of the layout. Not necessarily in want of a name, token monikers interchangeable. An unwavering replica of chosen manhood, forever strong, handsome, jealous to a fault. So enamored of her very perfection that to be out of sight for more than an hour requires the sheer endurance of pain. Phone calls at 2 a.m., visitations compulsive. Escorting the frozen look of beauty, frightened by the very nature of its pleasure and possibilities for cessation into the weals of a twilight's pinkish glow. Nightlife experienced, brisk with the glamour of neon and drink and laugh. He would fight for her hand, for her honor if need be. For the woman possessing bright smiles in her eyes. Button eyes he will always, call them, not matter who the "he" happens to be.

"Come on, babe."

"Let go!" She winces as the grip encircles her arm, angry little flare-up spotting his priming of the "pump," draining away every drop he can get. But then, they always get that way. The careful attentions, twinge of fawning jealousy that is more than just a tinge, avowals of devotion, and reassurances honeyed in rehearsed coatings. Slowly, gradually, it all begins to push.

"Okay, dear," he said with the infinite patience of a cockroach," I'll give you a bit more time. You know I love you. I really do." He touches her shoulder. With a wave of the hand, she shoos his departure, hating inside every single thing about his sculptured, withdrawing form and loving every single thing about her own spasmodic rages. The things she can get away with. Just too bad it always ends, displays flagging in an inevitable downward slope. Too bad, as the days would be better if this could last, the intimidation of a woman possessed, rendered intractable by "that time of the month", or god knows what else, feminine mysteries a constant source of fits. But soon enough the rapids clam, opening a pathway for other, masculine intrusions to the world of animosity.

"Ahh." A fading sigh as forehead touches laminate, playing that picture show again and again. Episode Inversion. An eventuality she knew upon meeting him, every single one of hims, first stage love just a rehearsal for hate. Jealousy transformed into possessiveness, the voice of stable support now authoritative, commanding every move. Surprise visits once played for the pleasing of a waif mutate into something vulgar as he checks the sheets, head down, nose sniffing, for strange men's semen. Nights of dancing and laughing are banished by sullen accusations, he no longer fighting for her honor in some noble move for respect but rather in a grotesque essay to keep from others what is his own personal property. Not caring about her well-being, just needing the package tidy. Pristine. Either madonna or whore, and he will not accept the latter. Friends are kept at bay before driving them off altogether, she flirting shamelessly with every man in sight. Or so he says.

And then comes the hits. She cries and deep down secretly enjoys them, having been blindsided by the early rush of fascination. Knowing then, he wouldn't do it unless he was taking her for granted. And that's the real meaning of closeness. Of family. Of those who will never go away unless she herself chooses to leave. But then she can't, can she, having backed herself into a corner. Learning through conditioning and the gradual withdrawal of love to accept meager crumbs like throwing a dog a bone After all, she's not really that bad looking - is not really that bad a person either. Just a bit unsure of what she really is or is not, never having been given a chance. Learned helplessness, letting them make the decisions, manipulated through fear and the withholding of hugs.

Pressing harder into palms rough with household chores, her cheeks grow reddened. They match her eyes.

"So how 'bout it, honey?"

She's calm now, temper fading to a soft glow, wearing itself down through the spiraling of repetition. The hard pout of the bottom lip is replaced by a vulnerable softness, an expression she finds troubling. She hates her mouth. It makes her look like a pushover - a nice, safe woman. He comes to her closer along with a feline companion, both knowing the storm has passed. It's safe again to ask and push. She sighs wearily and lets them run all over her. A single finger steps its way up cheekbones, and he wipes away the swelling. All better. All gone. He smiles at his own childish gesture, knowing the hit has got to smart. It will be a big one. Nothing a little dab of Cover Girl won't fix, though, and besides, she doesn't care anyway. Her state is vulnerable and open to suggestion - or another hit if that's what it takes. Angel does not allow henpecking for long.

"So how 'bout it, honey, will you do it for me? Please? Go down to Beecher. I do need it - I so honestly do." He means a drink.

She picks her head up, cocked in indecision, a well of emotions crossing her features, each one fleeting, skimming for no more than a second, and the sorely needed touch retracts. The hands stop caressing, lips stop their gentle nibbles, knowing it is now or never. She will either do it, in which case proddings are no longer needed, or she won't, in which case there is no use wasting precious time and energy. More comfortable sitting in front of the tv set.

Waiting expectantly, he pulls his height up to its full 6'2", hoping the imposing figure will assist in the decision. She glances up at the set of his lips and pictures herself walking out the door, striding coldly down to Beecher Street, putting her body on the corner. So he can have his goddamn beer. So he can have some money, never mind the real price.

"You know I really do cherish this woman who sits in the chair. You know it. I know you know. "

The inflection catches her off guard - always does - and she rises, pulling off a baggy t-shirt and slipping on the halter, promising all the while this is the last. He said so himself - this drink a farewell, a permanent goodbye to the buzz. His final salute.

"You promise?" She asks the question; he knows what she is talking about despite the voice that screams "patterns don't change."

"Sure." A cocky grin and a pat on the butt. He pushes her towards the door.

On the other side of the lock she turns the key quietly and with talons white from the force, grips onto that final hope. Just one more time. Just one more time.

Duty

Tracy Panepinto

I spy the mission commander out of the corner of my eye. She's coiled in the captain's chair, knees pulled up tight to her chin as she stares at the readouts under the cracked surface before her. Black numbers march silently over the borderless white panel, disappearing into nothingness at some undefined edge. She leans over and places her ear an inch from the display. On her face is an expression of earnest effort. She hasn't washed her hair in weeks. There's a fleck of some dried food supplement at the corner of her mouth.

I go back to checking the backup communication/navigation array panel. A row of numbers tells me we are transmitting data from one of the countless experiments we have on board. This one works automatically. I watch the digitized lines flash by. Days from now, back on Earth, the process of reassembling it into some form of understandable information will begin.

Lang, the science tech who runs the experiments, disappeared two weeks ago. Neither Jan-Carmen nor I have looked for him. The ship isn't so big that we couldn't find him if we looked. If he wants to remove himself from our little micro-society, it doesn't matter much to us. True to his training, though, he still conducts his experiments on schedule. He would be called a true professional.

So would I. So would Jan-Carmen. Months of rigorous training were designed to prepare us for any eventuality on this mission. The Powers that Be at Control already came up with answers to anything we could ask. And we can recite them as automatically as Lang's plasma collectors can transmit data to Earth. No need for weighty decisions out here. That could cause undue stress on the crew. Sixteen months in space - who needs more stress than that?

We're ten months into the loop. That's our flight course, a narrow loop. We passed the halfway mark. The sleek consoles hum quietly around me. It's all the same hum, nothing to mark the different machines contained under the endless white panel. To my left a square of white light starts blinking inside a black frame; an incoming message, four days old. I dutifully touch the blinking box and the message begins.

"How you guys doing out there, huh? We haven't heard from you in a while." It is the synthesized voice of our on-board computer, deciphering the coded pulses from Earth. "What have you been up to?" The cool electronic monotone conveys no emotion. "Well, it's mission day 314, that's May 23rd. We got your probe transmission. And that last zero-g series. It looks real good. Exciting stuff." There was a pause of several seconds, indicating that the small talk was over. "We'd like a voice transmission from you guys. It's been quite a while. We're getting worried. You've been out a long time - we know it's tough. All of us here think it would be good for you to touch base with us more than often.

"Jan..., Jan, in your last transmission you expressed some worry about Crewman Kelley. You mentioned a problem. We'd like to hear more about that. We'd like to help if there's a problem." Another pause, then the voice droned on, "We'll be waiting to hear from you. Control out."

I touch the panel again, shutting down communications. Jan isn't going to send a message. Neither am I, and who knows when Lang will surface again to do anything. The transmission about Kelley is a month old. Control keeps trying to raise us every twelve hours. Nobody here feels like talking to them .

The mission commander cuts the lights in the cabin, leaving only a waist high band glowing in the white walls. She turns on some music she pirated onto the ship before launch. Something last century. Blues, I guess. She's on a gravity grid in her white flight suit with the insignia ripped off. Barefoot, she's swaying in time to the heavy beat, eyes closed and head back, hugging her arms around herself. Technically, we're supposed to report any unusual behavior in our fellow crew members back to Earth. Control is interested in our observations. They're concerned with our well-being.

They don't define unusual behavior, though, and there's a reason for that. An unspoken rule of long space flights is that the crew is going to go a little crazy. It's expected. And nobody on Earth is really in a position to do much about it. Whatever problems arise with the crew, we have to handle it ourselves.

Looking back on it now, I don't know if Kelley was really any more whacked out than the rest of us. She was more vocal, that's for sure. She was a talker. That was the problem.

No. The problem was that she was a thinker.

Back then Lang had taken to cutting his fingers open and watching the blood drip out. He said he just wanted to see something besides white panels and black numbers. That was good enough for me. I didn't ask again, and he didn't talk anymore about it. But he kept doing it for a while. Jan-Carmen has always turned the lights down and kind of danced to her music. She's done long tours before and knew what to expect. I just keep rechecking back-up circuit boards. I like the way the scanner gives a tiny pop when it completes the sweep. I swear I can feel that pop in my finger tips. The others say that can't be.

Kelley would talk, though. And think. Think and talk. And the rest of us weren't used to that. It wasn't part of our training. There probably wasn't anything strange about it, really. She only talked to herself, to start. With so much time to think about all the things there are to think about, it probably wasn't unusual for her to talk like she did. But it wasn't professional.

She started questioning the things that we had pounded into our heads back in pre-flight. She asked why we had been trained so thoroughly. Over trained, she said. She couldn't understand why they wanted us to do everything automatically, without having to think. She wanted to have a puzzle to solve. Thought that should be her job. It was what she had been educated to do. She didn't like it that they had given us all the answers before we left. That all we could do was push buttons and record data.

She just talked and at first, even though we heard her, nobody paid any attention. After the first few months, we were all having it a little rough, so it didn't seem strange that she would talk to herself like that. I would check boards, Lang would slice up his fingers, and Jan-Carmen would sway to her blues.

Then she started talking *to* us. *Making* us listen. Getting right in our faces and telling us things that she had been thinking about. Seven and a half months out and everybody is a little crazy. We didn't need to hear her be crazy when we each had our own crazy to control. But she wouldn't stop. She had gotten it into her head that the whole mission was a kind of experiment. A psychology experiment. That we were guinea pigs. After a while she thought that that was the puzzle she was supposed to solve. And she wanted us to listen to her. She wanted us to question. It wasn't *professional*. We were trained to be professional.

She questioned why we were put through so much training when we were already highly trained in our fields. She wanted to know so many of the experiments were automatic. Why the ship had been redesigned, and why we were not supposed to have any personal belongings. She thought it was odd that none of us had any close family. Her doubts were endless, and she made us listen.

Then she stared cutting up her uniform - found some wire mesh in the trim and insignia. I tried to tell her it was just so the material would keep its shape, but she said we were being monitored. Then she started in on the ship. The same wire mesh is in all the trim on the chairs, beds, tables - all the hatches and doors. She pulled everything apart. She said it was inhuman what they were doing to us. Like rats in a cage. She said all of our work out here was a sham. That our work wasn't even real.

Jan-Carmen tried to reason with her. She sat down and asked her why anyone would conduct that kind of experiment. Kelley couldn't really answer that one. She said why do we do any experiments? To know. Just to know. All the equipment on board was just so people could know. She was convinced of it. Lang made a good argument. I thought for a couple of days that he had gotten through to her. He told her that his experiments were real. Our work was real. That in ten years, when the scientists go done the data, some millionaire would buy the technology and use it to become a billionaire. It happened all the time. Somehow that made her feel better.

That might have been the end of it, too, if Control hadn't picked that time to start checking in on us more often. Kelley thought it was because she had ripped the wire mesh out of our flight suits and cut up the chairs and stuff. She thought they were calling because they couldn't monitor us anymore.

Finally Jan-Carmen said *So what*. What if the whole mission was a human experiment? We could handle it. It didn't change anything. We could still do our jobs, and it shouldn't matter.

I guess somehow it mattered to Kelley. She wouldn't shut up. Said it invaded her rights. Invaded all our rights. She kept on it for weeks.

Then things got messy. Kelley wanted me to turn the ship back to Earth. Straight back - most direct path - no loop. She said that I wouldn't be able to do, it, that I really didn't have helm control. I told her I was going to follow my orders. We would complete the loop.

Just alter course then, temporarily - that was her next argument. That was what she wanted. I ignored her for a few more days. Then, I don't know. I guess she got me wondering. Jan-Carmen and Lang both knew all this. They knew she had been at me real bad. That I wasn't so sure anymore. But neither one tried to stop me from doing it. Nobody ordered me to maintain our plotted course.

They just watched. They wondered too.

As it turned out, Kelley was right. I didn't have helm control. The ship was being piloted from Earth some how. That changed things. If I wasn't the pilot and navigator, what was I? What was I doing out here? What was my duty? What was Jan-Carmen if she wasn't the mission commander? We didn't understand, but we kept to our work schedules. That's how well we had been trained.

Kelley couldn't do it, though. One night she really lost it. Just like that. She found a pipe somewhere and started bashing in the control stations. Navigation first. Then the antenna array panel. She broke as much as she could in the minutes before we got to her. When we got the pipe away , she went for the manual air lock. She was going to end the experiment. She was going to blast us all into the black vacuum outside the ship. That was when Jan-Carmen had to do it. There are explicit regulations concerning situations like that. She was endangering the mission. She was endangering all of us. We had to do it. Lang and I held her down, and Jan-Carmen put the surge stick to the base of her skull and pushed the button. A quick jolt and she was dead.

We disconnected an emergency quarantine tube from life support and sealed the body in that. Lang and Jan-Carmen wrestled it into an aft cargo hold. Three days later Jan-Carmen jettisoned the hold. We have been leaving a trail of experiments all through the loop. It seemed kind of fitting that Kelley be added to that. That was when Jan-Carmen made the last transmission to Control. She started to report what had happened but never finished. She wouldn't give them that.

We still keep to our schedules, because that's what we've been trained to do. Trained thoroughly. The ship still flies, even with broken equipment. Nothing seems to have changed. Except that Kelly is dead. And that she was right. Neither of us says, but I know Jan wonders too; was Kelley supposed to figure it out? Was that the experiment?

The Family Preservation...

Chris Phaby

The family preservation is limited;
A brother or sister, an excuse for friends;
Parents, a mistake;
Children, an accident.

I Seek to Know...

Chris Phaby

I seek to know your eyes;
your restless eyes,
drip of emotion;
identity in color;
read them like a book.
I beg you for mercy.

Man Has His Soul...

Chris Phaby

Man has his soul.
The soul,
to fight,
to bite
to conquer what told.
Deity has their own.
Their own,
to flee
to complete
to ravel and unfold.

Look at the Childen...

Chris Phaby

Look at the children!
Look at them fill their stomachs
with cola and candy.
Look at them cry in terror
at the masked clowns.

Hear them laughing at nothing at all.

Chopping Wood...

Chris Phaby

Chopping wood.
Constructing fire.
Huge stone temples.
Religion.
Humanity.

---A silent eternity.

What is This...

Chris Phaby

What is this
and
what is that?

Who are you
and
what do you want?

"We want to start a religion;
to form groups of followers
who will assist in our beliefs and accept proposals;
"We want to rule
to guide
to lead
to begin,
our religion------us."

Tell everybody,
"I believe, follow me."

Triumphant is the Deity...

Chris Phaby

Triumphant is the Deity
who edits
his kingdom successfully.
Defeated is the pharoah
who consumes
the light of the sparrow.
Foolish are the men
who resist
the hand of Zen.
Victorious is the soul
who responds
to none but his own.

The American Woman...

Chris Phaby

The American Woman --
quick to resist;
content and aware.
Do you wish
to bear her child--
or her burden?

For Years and Years....

Chris Phaby

For years and years
has the unspoken gentleman
received his wrongdoings.
---The day of rest
will simultaneously cease,
and the consistency of knowledge
will flow from beneath.

From the King's Tub

Rachel Rimgale

Here sadness is awakened
I shook it from the root
In death I am forsaken
As sadness was my truth
Looking it in the eye
I heard an echo
and absorbed its shadowed pain
I have been crucified
Drumming to the march
Deeming me the Abel and Cain
In my heart I fear loneliness
While my soul is dining with fear
Getting elevated off the chaos
Until the Indians appear
Paint me a green throne
One I can spit on
Before my laughter is loathed
Fingerpainting my final prose
Silence my betrayal
I was a muse with a cut throat

To Charles

Rachel Rimgale

While morbidity calls to me
I pray to the one
To lengthen my fury
To seize me from this boredom
that is circling about my freakiness
Igniting itself like the flames
of a man-made scientist
Treacherous they are
to shudder the eyes to an unknown spirit
Incinerating the treasures
that bare the nectar for those who hear it
In uneasy solitude
I abhor them... and it
Treaded on, tired, and used
As opaqueness breeds to shorten the claims
It is comical even the vindictive do not see it
For they are lying in their self-dug graves
And I in high almightiness
Arrogantly, bitterly chastise
Shrouded in crushed human spirit
A hypocrite baptised

Mom

Rachel Rimgale

How can she not know
the pain in my eyes
is the pain I have caused her
I have been her constant terror
Beginning with my birth
I could never be the death of her
For her I would backtrack
That would be the death of me
But never could I stab her in the back
She is the the most precious
Everything she is to me
Rejecting the thought that I may lose her
God never take her from me
It seems I am held captive
Always struggling to break free
Bonded by more than blood and flesh
Never will I be released

Paper Thin

Chris Savini

My neighbor is a jerk.
His children cry too much.
He's not the kind
of dad
who has tools,
he doesn't fix things.
There is no patience in his eyes.
There is tension in his voice.
He yells when his
children try to talk to him.
He drinks,
and leaves the refrigerator door open.
He's loud.
His voice carries through my floor when I try to sleep.
"I'LL KICK YOUR ASS ALL NIGHT
YOU LITTLE BITCH!"
I hope she never wets her bed again, because
I can never listen to that kind of screaming again.

Trinity

Chris Savini

I opened my eyes in time
to see three crows fall from the sky,
three shards of black descended from the light. Three anarchists disenchanted with the atmosphere defected to the trees.

I laid in the grass
and listened to these black birds
screech in the branches.
Three noisy devils flapped about,
and plotted chaos in the shade.

I stared down the throat of the sky
and watched three crows dive into the belly
of heaven,
three winged hypocrites
melted into ether.

(inspired by Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird by Wallace Stevens)

An Early Morning Snow Began to Fall As I Read the Train Schedules at Fifth Avenue Station

Chris Savini

The keening horn of the
Chicago bound, Burlington North engine
roused me from my trance of arrivals
and departures,
in time to watch the snow spray up
from the tracks into clouds
which swallowed me as it passed.
And in those blind seconds
I felt the train's force
its rumbling, pounding motion
its electricity,
its life.
But this train doesn't stop here,
and I felt its speed as it passed me by
never noticing me
never noticing me
never noticing me.

A Cemetery on Fire

Chris Savini

It started small
and now it's raging in the moonlight,
a couple flames
and now the oaks are crackling in the heat,
the headstones are wearing black,
the cemetery's burning
as I watch across the wheatfield,
the orange glow is seen for miles
and no one is alarmed,
the cemetery's burning
and to the flames goes an eyesore
unkept and overgrown
a fire best left alone,
the cemetery's burning
and the displaced are already dead
past the need for dignity,
easy enough to hide away
scatter the remains
build a strip mall in its place,
the cemetery's burning
and I ignore the fire in the wheatfield
like my children breathing butane in the yard
like the kerosene in my veins.
(for the residents of the Chicago Housing Authority)

Swirl

Carolyn Schwenke

Some swirl I don't understand what
And why, why do this to me and yourself and us and me not
for me But the me of why I care why it matters

And I can't understand if the swirl
Is conscious
And you inside wanting to crush yourself slowly

You know I know the feeling
And me I wanted ruin but it couldn't be so hard in me that
I stopped thinking forever

Try like I know you can for me to stop
For you it's what you need
And live in there forever safe is alive

More than only alive
Live for bigger things than a silly you it brings
Poison powder

Cut the string

Brushes

Carolyn Schwenke

mmmm... the color
shape of

what?

my eyes work

I can't use them

look with

what?

pattern?
shades?

oh...the color
shape of

an idea

Listen

Carolyn Schwenke

After
Believe it all
Believe all every word
All those you never heard
And the ones you missed
(interpretation)
You can't leave
So now and after
Believe

Dark Sorrow

Carolyn Schwenke

Thick air of fog pain
Stops the easy bounce
Drowning to the deeper bottom
Kills night's hidden heart

Royalty

Manuel Tamayo

I can feel it growing inside me,
the curse of a thousand fools.
The death of a thousand crimson flags,
and the breaking of all its rules.

Kill the King
watch him die.
Burn the bastard
bury him alive.
I knew it was me
the end of time.
The dawning of a new age
the last in line.

Kill the Queen
her hand is dead.
Plague across the land
and the sea turns red.

Blind

Manuel Tamayo

Wandering through dark, desolate hours
Through eyes of a child, feeling the power,
standing at the tip-top tank of the tower...
Staring down at her,
and him.
Him. The trouble he has caused,
Now. The second as I pause,
Down. With a cry,
of pain as he lies
on the ground of truth -
and begins to die.
He's using her every day of her life,
and she's too blind to see...
Me

Destiny Princess

Manuel Tamayo

Lord help me forget this feeling inside
My Head, my heart, my all...
Help.
The sticky sharpness of summer had dawned,
all along the city and...
In the valley,
lay the beautiful princess with hair of coal...
Help me,
forget those days of old.
I am weak and tired, please shelter me.
Deprived and starved, may I lean upon thee?
Dark eyes shine on my soul.
The eyes of the princess,
can take their toll.
The sweat rolling down my nose.
The ecstasy of a single pink rose,
And the dance...
The dance of the damned.
Help.
I'm coming vapor around the light,
seconds of pleasure, screams in the night.
Baby, please don't dance.
I fear the worst, fair princess.
My heart is useless,
her beauty...priceless.
And the dance was timeless...

Eyes of fire lock,
The four winds beyond the clock...
Destiny approaches,
In the form of an object.
I do, I do, I do,
Love thee,
you Me,
Eternity...

So I ask my Lord to help me forget.
I ask with thy last breath...
And hers.

Buildings Line Like Graves

Kim Vollmer

Buildings line like graves
just filled in. They overflow.
He used to be a mound
with a door at each end, a grave,
a building just filled in.
Waxed windows, eyes, all lined like
a complex, a neighborhood. Like the
stripes on his shirt
stiff though he bends. He used to live
where colors oppose
because that's what colors are for.

He says they are promising new books
to walk the walk, remember, read,
hide. It is the news of the days.
He is the photograph when I hand it
back, when he can't look up from it.

Years later, when his teeth are filed,
he asks me to remind him that what
he emulates has legs. Has more walking
and reading to do.
As much as anyone.

He says he never knew what was hungry
about love. He is shaking with translation.
I am twenty-seven countries and two
languages away, promising that I know.

To Scissor

Kim Vollmer

I know someone who is carry fame.
It is tied to her hair in strands,
tucked into her coat this winter.
When I pull it out to show her
she asks me to trim it. Her hair
is longer than mine, brown even in
the sun.

When I back through the door holding
the scissors, I wonder what is cut
open, and what will mend. It is like
the weather when men gather in it
this is where decisions are made.

She notices me
and the men coming one at a time
to the window. They collect hair,
authenticity, favors. They're building
something in the yard, it's too soon
to tell what it is.

She says when someone comes to the window
it is the same as backing into a room,
doorway arching out of the way, it means
they can't decide.

Before I hand the red man some of the hair
I've cut, I shake the fame into the trash.
I watch settle, stretch
and smile. He is thankful, he rattles
the glass so she'll look over.

She is embarrassed about the highlights
in her hair, how there aren't any. It is
sunny today, someone is sure to notice.

A Spring's View

Kim Worley

The hint of blue
with pillows of white
flowing freely.
The heat from the sun warming our bodies,
brightening our days while the birds sing their melodies.
The flowers pushing forth, colors of rainbows.
Bold
the trees stand before us.
Reaching toward the skies,
life and all it stands for, appreciating each day.
Until it no longer lives.

The Question of Me

Kim Worley

Search my eyes
you should find
blazing longing desires.

The joy, the laughter,
the memories.
Is there to be?

In your heart
in your mind
you have found me.

Your Challenge to be Free

Kim Worley

The fussing, cussing, dancing in the streets
Challenging me to bring forth
the best that I can be.

The users, abusers and of course the many losers
It is just a part of everyday life.

The street gangs that come, out to fight,
challenging their opponents as to who will
win tonight.

The winners, achievers, the misdemeanors
Just look at the people who try indeed to lead us.

The winos that lie in the gutter,
The bag lady - she could be your very own mother.

I accept the challenge that life has given me
As sure as I am, I am free

Riches from Dimes

Kim Worley

Hey brother
can you spare me a dime?
I'm sorry man,
I don't have the time.
What do you mean
you don't have the time?
I was around
when you needed a dime.
So it's like this
I see.
Is this the way
it's going to be.
Remember my friend
when you're down and out
when you can't get about,
you have to give in order
to receive.

WORDEATER 91 STUDENT JURY

Pat Erickson
Michael Fletcher
Jennifer Frye
Jeff Hicks
Tracie Laczynski
Mary Frances Lund

John Stobart, Literary Advisor
Mary Frances Lund, Editor
Scott Olsen, Technical Advisor

For a selection to be printed in this issue, four of the above students had to vote for acceptance. For the award winners, only John Stobart is responsible.

AWARDS

POETRY $5.00 each

Philip Antonini — Dojna Corzine
Jeff Hicks — Allen Markus
Chris Phaby — Chris Savini

PROSE $5.00 each

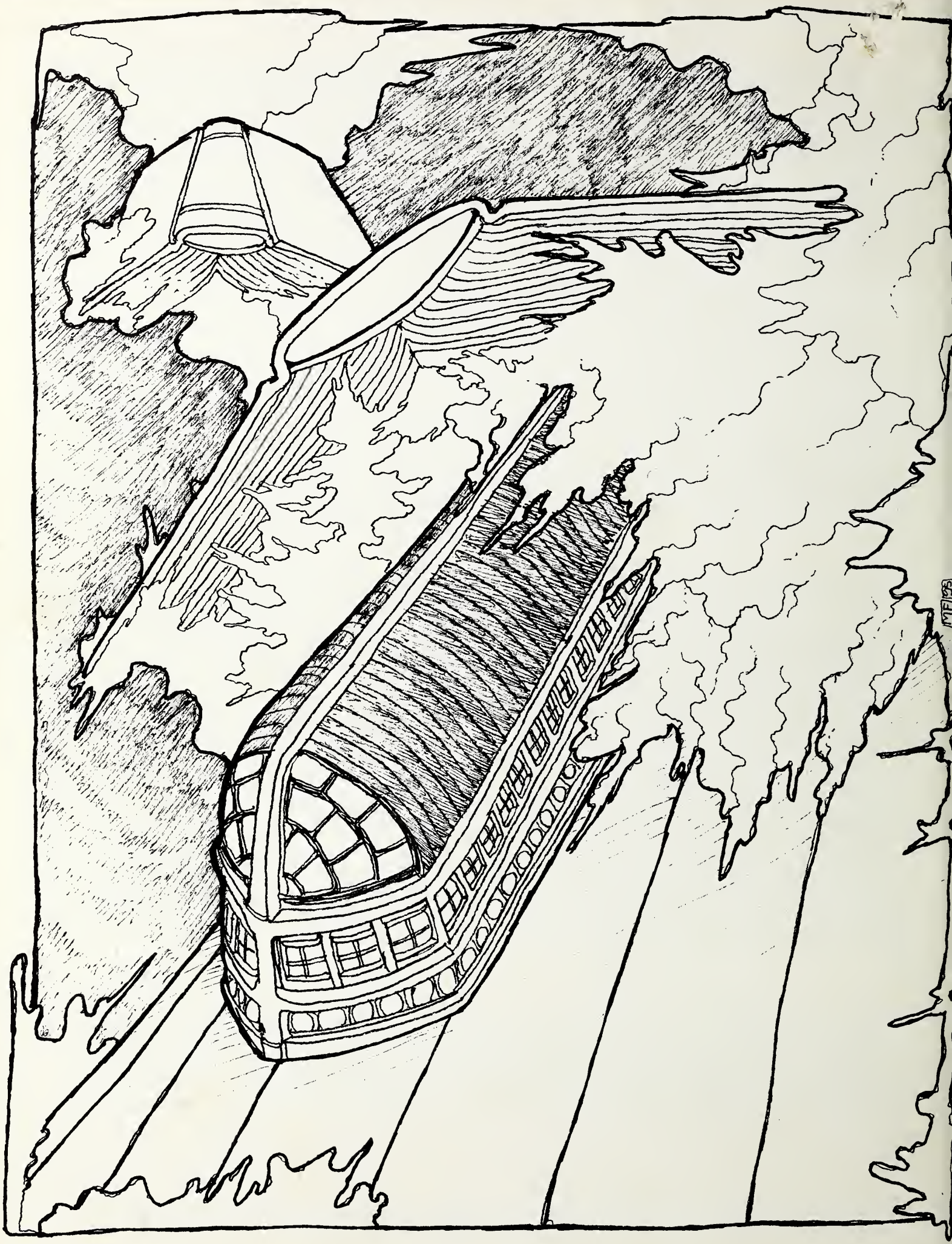
Tracie Laczynski — kim Ormond
Tracy Panepinto — Manuel Tamayo

COVERS (front and back) $20.00

Michael Fletcher

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Manuscripts and cover designs must be submitted to:
John Stobart, room C1069,
by
September 29, 1995 - Wordeater 93
November 17, 1995 - Wordeater 94

Manuscripts should be typed and will not be returned. Illegible copy will not be considered.

This issue contains selections from students, faculty, and friends of Joliet Junior College. Only current students, however, are eligible for awards.